IMAGINING
THE END

VISIONS OF APOCALYPSE *from the*
Ancient Middle East to Modern America

Edited by ABBAS AMANAT &
MAGNUS T. BERNHARDSSON

I.B.TAURIS

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Lodged in the heart of each of the four great monotheistic religions to emerge from the Middle East lies an immutable, inescapable theological certainty: Apocalypse.

While this vision has expressed itself in different ways in each of the four monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam, the phenomenon is intrinsically similar. Exploring a range of ancient and modern cultural and religious experiences, and drawing on the interdisciplinary research of a distinguished group of scholars, *Imagining the End* highlights the importance of millennial and apocalyptic paradigms and their historical expressions in diverse settings. It demonstrates how visions of the End and eschatological scenarios – particularly the cycles of destruction and renewal in the canons of the major religions of the Middle East - have generated complex interpretations in cultures as diverse as early Judaism, classical Islam, medieval Europe, Africa, China, Iran and the United States. In the American context, unusually rich for religious experimentation, such motifs have given rise to prophetic visions and millennial hopes.

What is the history of Millennialism? In what ways can patterns or phenomena that link the four faiths be discerned? Why has Millennialism so powerfully excited the human imagination within this monotheistic context? In seeking to answer these questions, this book demonstrates that the shared apocalyptic legacy among all four traditions has helped to shape not just the doctrines of these religious communities but also major currents in human history from the rise of new religions to political revolution.

Imagining the End

Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America

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Magnus Bernhardsson

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Preface

The papers in this volume were first presented to a year-long faculty and graduate seminar at Yale University in 1998. Approaching millennialism from both textual and historical perspectives, the contributors to this volume discussed the origins and the evolution of apocalyptic and millennial ideas and movements in the four major religious traditions of Middle Eastern origin: Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam over a long span of time from the ancient Middle East to medieval and early modern Europe and from the pre-modern Islamic era to modern times. The six papers on the modern and contemporary periods examined American, African, Chinese and Iranian millennialism.

Contributors to this collection are also remarkable because they represent the state of scholarship in their related fields and together they present a rare comparative approach to the study of millennialism. Like any comparable collection, however, there are major regions and periods which are not addressed, even those trends which are within the domain of Western religions, most notably Latin American, Byzantine, Russian, Eastern European, and medieval and modern Jewish, and millennialism in Eastern religions. Moreover, Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism and indigenous millennial beliefs of the Pacific, pre-Colombian America and native American, and Africa were also deemed outside the concern of this volume. Likewise, apocalyptic and millennial expressions in arts and literature can be the subject of another volume.

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Introduction: Apocalyptic Anxieties and Millennial Hopes in the Salvation Religions of the Middle East

Abbas Amanat

> A thousand years I can await your boon,
> Whenever you come, is a moment too soon.
>
> *Sana'i*

Now that the public euphoria surrounding the turn of the century is at its ebb, the time has come to reflect on the scholarship on the origins and evolution of millennialism as a historical phenomenon, its multifaceted manifestations, and its lasting grip over the human imagination. At the turn of the third millennium, the secularized Christian calendar of our time has reached an almost global recognition beyond its religious origin. Appropriate to the post-modern information society, the primary concern at the recent millennial turn was anxiety about computers' dating malfunction, the so-called Y2K problem (or the Millennium Bug); an apt reminder of similar fears of chaos and hopes for ultimate redemption in different calendaric junctures and in diverse cultures. As the essays in this volume demonstrate, the complex recurrence of apocalyptic and millennial paradigms is intrinsically tied to humanity's striving to imagine, anticipate and help bring about a tormenting End, and through that agony a fresh Beginning.

The chapters in this volume, whether historical or exegetical in approach, highlight the presence of apocalyptic themes in religious traditions that originated in the Middle East, the features they have in common, as well as their peculiarities. Further, the essays demonstrate the interaction between these archetypal motifs and indigenous cultures in medieval and modern times. It is primarily this shared apocalyptic legacy of salvation in Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam that helped shape not only the theological perspective and eschatology of these religious communities, but also

served as a driving force behind major currents in human history from the rise of new institutional religions to political revolutions and intellectual movements. The purpose of this collection is to address these themes beyond conventional understandings of millennialism. Further, it aims to evaluate the political, cultural and social manifestations of millennialism starting in the ancient Middle East where earliest paradigms of the apocalyptic narrative were shaped.

The End Paradigm

Perhaps the most recognizable feature in the Middle Eastern narrative of the final events, the End paradigm in the Zoroastrian and Jewish traditions, is that it operates as a reverse process to the myth of the Beginning, what is often identified as the binary of the *zeitgeist* and the *endgeist*. As in other nature-orientated cosmologies, the eschatological narrative of the final events commemorates a seasonal cycle. Despite much variation, this powerful motif relies on celestial and agricultural imagery to convey a sense of continuity in the cycle of life and death, an essential feature of any enduring socio-religious cosmology. In the salvation religions of the Middle East the binary of the Beginning and the End paradigms is particularly powerful since it generally functions as a strategy to resolve the tension engendered by the problem of theodicy. The struggle between good and evil, which has endured since the dawn of creation, will culminate in a destructive final battle in which the victory of the forces of good over evil will be followed by divine judgment and the reward of a timeless bliss.[1]

Unravelling the mysteries of the End paradigm has long been the pre-occupation of believers whether as commentators of the encoded messages of the scriptures or, more often, as human agents called upon to realize the scenario of the End. In any given situation, the millennialists tend to engage in some form of temporalizing the past prophecies and demonstrate the imminence, or near imminence, of the End at their own time and place. Applying prophecies to contemporary settings, needless to say, is distinct as much from the modern critical reading of the scriptures as it is from the ahistorical timelessness usually attached to the prophecies by the 'authoritative' exegeses, be it the Augustinian Church dogma, the Talmudic halakha, or the consensus of the Muslim 'ulama. By denying altogether the apocalyptic meaning of the prophecies (or what is considered by millenarians as prophecies), the authoritative readings often relegate these prophecies to an unspecified distant future far from this-worldly access and safely curtailed by implausible preconditions. This is indeed the rationale behind the prohibition shared by all 'orthodox' traditions to 'set the time' of the End, an

obvious precaution against the millenarian textual subversion and urge for temporality.

To temporalize the prophecies and other scriptural evidence, whether literal or allegorical, the millennialists have employed various strategies to make their evidence announce the anticipated End and the events preceding it. The act of prognosticating the End necessitates a preoccupation with time reckoning and calendaric. Equally common is the wide usage of the occult sciences, especially numerology and esoteric knowledge of the letters. To the chiliastic adept, sacred dates and deadlines encoded in the verses of any given scripture, and in the sayings of prophets and saints (as well as in non-textual evidence), were mysteries urgently awaiting decipherment. Indeed, the whole material world, with its seasonal changes and natural and human calamities, was seen as a text which is to be read with esoteric methods mastered by millennialists through rigorous study, mortification, intuition, dreams and mystical experiences.

The alternative reality which emerged out of the temporalizing endeavours, beneath the apparent reality accepted and enshrined by authoritative exegeses, was particularly apt for cyclical reckoning. Both centennial and millennial, these cyclical courses were based on conventional calendaric and its variants. More often they were calculated from primal dates in a sacred text. Sacred chronology, especially in creation narratives, was favoured or even more specific dates such as those present in the Book of Daniel, the assumed date for the birth of Jesus, the *Hijra* of the Islamic Prophet, or the assumed Occultation of the Twelfth Imam in Shi'ism. In particular the notion of millennium, and its correlation to the events of the End, held a firm grip over the apocalyptic calendaric in all Western religions. As a unit of time reckoning, a millennium is a Babylonian invention. But it was probably in the Zoroastrian tradition of Iran that the millennium (*hazarag*) first earned an apocalyptic significance. It connoted the duration of a 1,000-year cycle in the finite battle between the forces of good and evil, a cyclical struggle which shapes the entire human history and will eventually end in the triumph of the Lord Wisdom and his associates over Ahriman. The events of the End therefore came to be linked in Zoroastrianism, as in the Hebrew tradition, and later in other apocalyptic literature of the Middle East, with 1,000-year periods, which were either explicitly or implicitly cyclical or, as in the conventional Christian apocalyptics, a one-time occurrence leading to an irrevocable End. Respectively, the centennial turns, as decimal denominations of the millennium, were often associated with temporary lapses of order. The spirit of decadence that had fallen upon humanity was to be rejuvenated with the turn of a new century. The Islamic notion of the 'renovator of the beginning of the century' (i.e. of the *Hijra* calendar) and perhaps even the

idea of *fin de siècle* in modern Western cultures, acknowledge such a centennial renewal. On a smaller scale, celebrating the beginning of a new year in most cultures conveys a sense of cyclical renewal. The Persian celebration of the Nowruz at the vernal equinox, for instance, commemorates seasonal renewal as a token of the millennial turn.

Millennialism and other forms of apocalyptic calendaric hence appear to be inherent to all Middle Eastern religions. It may be argued that they are far more essential for the continuity of the sacred and its perpetual renewal than our modern utilitarian notion of linear time and the concept of progress. Time cycles thus may be seen as regulatory means of placing utopian and eschatological aspirations, and whatever is associated with the Beginning and the End, within a humanly conceivable time-frame. Those who sifted through the sacred text for evidence of the End, laboured over the esoteric methods of discovering the encoded message, and subjected themselves and their followers to a rigorous course of abstinence, penitence and social exclusion, viewed the certainty of such calendaric calculations as indispensable and indisputable. For them the millennial turn (and other forms of calendaric cycles) had a momentary urgency, and the potential to actualize apocalyptic aspirations. These individuals and communities, by taking upon themselves the divine charge of bringing closer the hour of the End, attempt to fulfil the conditions scripted in the text. In an impregnated millennial momentum, common to all apocalyptic trends, a crucial shift occurs from dormant aspirations to vigilant ambitions. This turning point invariably pertains to crossing a psychological barrier – one which divides adherence to the established belief system from an experience of rebirth – and in turn discovering a communal identity with like-minded individuals.

Playing an active part in temporalizing the apocalyptic scenario, the participants view their role, and that of their opponents, as divinely ordained though not entirely devoid of human initiatives and strategies. This curious mix of the scripted and the improvised, the providential design and its human deciphering, is germane to most apocalyptic currents. It stands to determine the nature of their unravelling, whether peaceful and 'optimistic', radical and destructive, or more often a combination of the two. Yet in all instances an urgency for arriving at the divine judgment, salvation and millennial bliss remains the ultimate goal. In the visions of the End we observe the ideals of generations, utopian dreams and nightmares, fanatical obsessions with providential plan, and prospect for a regressive or a progressive future; a mirror to societies' innate fears and aspirations.

Predictably, millennial visions frequently contrasted with prevailing legal, theological and even pietistic norms of their time. Even more so, they were in conflict with the authorities, religious and temporal, who represented these

norms or served as their guardians. The history of millenarianism in all Western religions is suffused with, using a Weberian concept, clashes between priests and prophets. Yet precisely this antinomian quality of the apocalyptic experience, even in its speculative and tangential manifestation, brings to bear an imaginative alternative to the sanctified dogma. Whether crude and naïve at their inception or fully developed and articulated, these trends sought creative directions untenable to prevailing theology, if not altogether prohibited by it. Yet not all millennial trends were forward-looking in their doctrinal disposition or inclusive in their social message. Moreover, some mystics and theologians, even philosophers, who were not overtly millenarian in their recognized thinking, at times subscribed to millennial paradigms to put across their most speculative, controversial and utopian thoughts. Covert millennialism, for the greater part, still remains unexplored. Engagements of these speculative millennialists, overt or covert, did not, however, exclude a vast array of those individuals labelled as crackpots, eccentrics and fanatics, those who crowded the history of popular apocalypticism. Nor can one fail to notice at times in the same millennial environment, contrasts and compromises of glaring magnitude. A not so subtle coexistence of the mundane and the sublime defined many apocalyptic quests. An uneasy marriage of anger, violence and intolerance with peace and acumen, of naïveté and demagogy with sophistication and creativity, and of folk beliefs with venerable erudition, characterizes the visionary ground upon which millennial edifices were often built.

Contradictions aside, in their morally sharpened worldview, millenarians reject the legalistic and ritualistic strategies for salvation as offered by religious authorities (though they often do incorporate the mystical and the ascetic ways). In their effort to save the world from evil, millennialists often demand total justice, material plenty and, at times, liberation from the yoke of religious or secular law by seeking an end to the prevailing order. In their estimation, such an order equates with absolute evil for its presumed corruption, injustice and the decadence that it has brought upon God's community.

Cycles and the Advent of the Messiah

A unifying motif in speculative millennialism, and a converging point of the absolute and the relative in this mode of thinking, is the concept of cyclical renovation. Imagining the End, whether a literal or allegorical annihilation of the physical world, necessitates a chaotic jolt to facilitate a new Beginning. Millennial currents, except perhaps for the most 'pessimistic' and/or doctrinally inarticulate, subscribe to one form or another of cyclical rebirth so as to place the convulsions of the End in a broader, and humanly more tolerable,

scheme. Such apocalyptic deconstruction is not an entirely aimless or nihilistic process. Though it often reflects the violent aspirations of the persecuted and the deprived, it also guarantees the continuity of the human race in celestial or terrestrial forms, be it the timeless bliss of an otherworldly paradise or in the post-apocalyptic reality. Such reality adheres to postponed prophecies and anticipation but also may attempt to build a earthly community on the perceived celestial model.

Inevitably, all apocalyptic currents subscribe to some form of symbolism, for it is difficult, even for strict literalists, not to read some level of allegory into the admonishing prophecies of the Hebrew Bible, the terrifying imagery of the Book of Revelation, or the warnings of the Qur'an and the *hadith* (the words and deeds of the Prophet). At least in early Christianity, even St Augustine's post-millennial doctrine, which denied the possible occurrence of an earthly apocalypse, could not be argued without resorting to some metaphorical device. Yet literal interpretations of the End are more likely to adhere narrowly to a sequence of prophesied events and to identify all heroes and villains in an apocalyptic scenario. Symbolic interpretations of the End, in contrast, are more likely to acquire a historical perspective, reading a hidden moral drama behind the textual description and seeking an imaginative, and even progressive, view of the future. Here the End paradigm is consciously employed to justify a doctrinal break with the existing 'orthodoxy'. The divinely consecrated orthodoxies, whether the church, the *shari'a*, or the Talmudic law, are considered timeless and eternal and cannot be perceived as terminable except with the occurrence of an apocalyptic End.

The theme of progression (or regression), associated with symbolic in-terpretation of the apocalyptic, views cyclical phases of human history as purposeful movements in time in either forwards or backwards directions. The metaphor commonly employed in the apocalyptic literature, such as in Zoroastrianism, is that of a tree, reflecting both a seasonal cycle and a gradual growth at the turn of a each cycle, hence spiral turns. The effectiveness of the tree metaphor lies in the fact that movement in time could be seen either as a process of maturation and strength or, alternatively, as regression towards eventual, though distant, demise. In either case, this spiral movement in time was distinct from the notion of immutable cycles upheld by some ancient Mesopotamian, or Egyptian, cosmologies whereby the eternal renewal of the time-cycle does not result in any progression or regression. The myth of the four-branched tree in the Book of Daniel, as discussed by John J. Collins (Chapter 4), and its Zoroastrian and Greek versions, mourns the eclipse of a golden age, symbolized by the golden branch, to be followed in later cycles by depreciated ages of silver, bronze (or iron) and clay. Such conception of time, presumably representing metallurgical revolutions of the ancient times,

denotes nostalgia for a golden past, contempt for the degenerate present, and a gloomy future. This regressive view of history, however, is not entirely devoid of potential for a dynamic, and even forward-looking, future. The end to the age of clay eventually comes with conflagration of the entire material world and reconstruction of the golden age. As late as in the Bab's *Bayan* in nineteenth-century Iran, we encounter the 'tree of the truth' conceptualizing his progressive revelation within the context of past and future prophetic cycles.

The act of cosmic reconstruction revolves around the figure of a human saviour. The rebirth (*farashkart*), an essential notion of Zoroastrian eschatology, is firmly tied to the advent of a charismatic figure who becomes the prototype for saviours in other religions of Middle Eastern origin. The Saoshyant's, who is of sacred origin, divine mandate and miraculous powers, epitomizes the forces of good and leads the armies of his human and angelic supporters in a cosmic battle that ends with the destruction of evil and the reconstitution of the original and lasting order. In Judaism, the Day of the Lord (*yum adunay*) similarly commences with the advent of a messianic saviour, the Mashiah, and culminates in the salvation of the people of Israel from the yoke of slavery. Christ's Second Coming, which initiates the *parusia*, brings about the millennial era (or ends it, according to the post-millennialist doctrine), and in Islam, especially in Shi'ism, the appearance of the Madhi initiates the process of the great revolt (*khuruj*) culminating in the Resurrection (*qiyama*) and the Day of Judgment (*yawm al-din*). In all these apocalyptic scenarios the power and charisma of the saviour is countered with those of his arch-opponent and mirror image. The Zoroastrian Ahriman (who is not humanly personified) is mightier than the Hebrew Bible's Belial, the Christian Antichrist, and the Islamic Dajjal, yet they all in various degrees serve as the personification of evil, an agent whose tyranny and terror runs supreme at the outset of the apocalyptic chaos before being eventually vanquished at the hands of the saviour and his army.

Not surprisingly, apocalyptic messianism through the ages has been the genesis of new religious currents and a predominant mode of prophetic expression. Jesus' own call for salvation and the birth of Christianity could not be fully explained without the apocalyptic spirit which consumed the Judeo-Hellenistic world of the first century. Nor can the essence of Muhammad's early mission be fully understood without the apocalyptic admonitions, calamities, and the terror of the Day of Judgment, as appears in the early *sura*s of the Qur'an. In more recent times Luther's call for reforming the Catholic Church, Shabbati Zevi's claim to be the Jewish messiah, Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad, the Bab's claim to be the Shi'i Mahdi and the evolving of his movement into the Baha'i faith, Joseph Smith's Church of Jesus Christ

of the Latter-Day Saints, and other American indigenous religions should be seen as conscious fulfilment of the messianic role conceived on the ancient biblical and Zoroastrian models. Messianic prophets emerge not only in a milieu of apocalyptic expectations, but their doctrinal unfolding and course of action tend to re-enact the apocalypse. In time, the movements they initiate tend to evolve in conjunction with the dynamics of their surroundings and in response to the whims and wishes of their supporters. From being precursors and agents to being the saviour who fulfils the scriptural prophecies, there is a gradual shift. As a millennial manifestation, a saviour may preside over a new dispensation and consciously engender a new religious system, thus crossing even the ancient biblical divide between prophethood and divinity.

In their post-apocalyptic phase, messianic movements seldom succeed in entirely transforming the pervasive apocalyptic notions in a given religious culture. Regardless of their success or failure to fulfil their perceived prophecies and regardless of becoming a conspicuous socio-religious force, messianic movements retain the intense expectation for an imminent paradisiacal bliss. In due course, therefore, the paradigm of the impending End is to be relegated into a supra-temporal space. Such a post-apocalyptic shift is deemed necessary, inadvertently perhaps, to allow a gradual routinization of the prophetic charisma and the emergence of an institutionalized creed. The alternative is to be reduced to sectarian marginality or altogether to be thrown into the repository of dormant memories, to be retrieved only as the raw material for re-emerging apocalyptic trends in later times. It goes without saying that beyond the launching phase, once a messianic movement comes of age, the sustaining of the millennial momentum in any organized religion often proves impossible. Without resorting to some form of future recurrence, possibly another millennial return, such anticipations are inherently viewed as subversive.

Millenarian Movements and Social Change

With few exceptions, millennial movements in Western religious traditions acquired a distinct socio-cultural dimension discernible in their social composition as well as in their explicit, or dormant, social message. Almost invariably they are socially inclusive movements which tend to break across class and other social barriers and create a momentary spirit of unity and equity within the community of believers. Anticipation for some form of divine judgment, though based on individual, rather than collective, deeds and misdeeds, is often translatable into a message of social justice. Moreover, the ultimate test of salvation in the anticipated Last Judgment is adherence

and loyalty to the messianic upholder of the truth, an act of individual choice, rather than the deeds of one's ancestors, tribe or community.

Individual choice, however, is curtailed by an intense sense of group identity which enacts and fulfils the scripted prophecies. This uneasy mix of voluntary choice and collective destiny has often been a source of attraction to the deprived, whether perceived or real, the underprivileged, the marginalized and the socially exiled. Promises of plenty and justice, or more likely vengeance, abound in apocalyptic literature; combined with ideals of love and sexual liberty, luxury and immortality, they offer a collective consciousness grounded in shared memories. Predictably, any millenarian melting pot renders an ethnic, occupational and class amalgam with implicit leitmotifs of modern nationhood and even conscious nationalism.

By the same token the apocalyptic rationale not only offers a frame of analysis for understanding human social behaviour across social divides, but also a source of solace and hope at moments of crisis. An apocalyptic outlook rationalizes real or perceived human suffering by treating it as providential design to expedite the millennial relief. Devastating wars, pandemics, genocide, earthquakes and floods hence were perceived as God's punishment to destroy the sinful, tyrannical rule, the arrogant and the corrupt and to vindicate the victims.

Moreover, though most 'positive' apocalyptic images and values were masculine and decidedly patriarchal, millenarian movements in reality were among the very few pre-modern social channels through which women could excel and even occupy positions of leadership. Ann Lee, the principal founder of the Shakers, shared her founding role with Qurrat al-'Ayn, one of the leaders of the Babi movement and an advocate of a break with Islam. Such prominence is in contradistinction to the misogynous imagery of the Judeo-Christian and Islamic apocalyptics which usually associate femininity with evil and women as deceptive agents of sin. The Whore of Babylon of the Book of Revelation had other counterparts.[2]

Women's presence may in part be attributed, at least in the Islamic context, to the antinomian self-perception which placed millenarians in a different plane from society at large as paragons of a value-free paradise. Millenarian communities often, though not as a rule, found in the very notion of the End a liberation from the restrictive socio-religious norms such as marital sanctions which were grounded in women's subordination and controlled sexuality. The End meant a deliberate transgression of these norms, whether the removal of the facial veil and other infringements of the prevailing dress code, appearance in the company of the men in public, even annulment of marriage and redefining the accepted notions of family.

Promise of paradisiacal bliss also meant in reality an equal access to the

limited material resources available to the community of believers. At times this gave rise to communistic practices of shared land and property, be it the believers' own or the spoils of wars waged against unbelievers. A spirit of remorseful austerity and egalitarian discipline were added leitmotifs but the momentum created by these practices seldom engendered democratic values. Millennial visions, in theory as well as in practice, remained largely akin to absolute power, a manifestation, so millenarians tended to believe, of God's absolute might and glory transfused through the saviour to his community. At their apex, few millenarian movements were hotbeds of democratic ideals, though in their post-apocalyptic phase some nurtured a greater pluralistic outlook perhaps because of a diffused leadership. Others remained firmly committed to the original absolutist culture and even reinforced it.

For the same basic reason most millenarian movements, at least in their climax, were not tolerant of the liberal ideals of religious tolerance and diversity. Nor were they all committed to a peaceful spreading of their message of salvation. The quest for expansion at various regional, national and international levels often propelled millennial programmes for action into instances of vengeance and eradication of doctrinal enemies. Desperately imprisoned in the confines of their own convictions, millenarians' dreams could easily turn into nightmares prescribed in the apocalyptic literature.

Alternatively, they could themselves become victims of society's undue suspicion and anger. Labelled as dangerous heretics, they were legitimate targets of torture, massacres, enslavement and mob frenzy, at times even more violent than their own visions. Frequently the fragile social structure of these movements could not withstand the joint forces of religious authorities and the state. Too often millenarian communities were wiped out of existence outside history books or the memory of their sectarian progeny. Those with enough coherence and stamina to sustain a semblance of group identity, inevitably developed pacifist strategies of survival. Belief in an ascended, hidden, lost or unidentifiable saviour who at some point in time will return to relieve the community from the oppression and torment to which it has been subjected, is a common feature of so many failed, or delayed, millenarian movements.

Millennialism as a Field of Study

Millennialism (or apocalypticism) emerged as a field of social and intellectual (in the humanities and social sciences) studies beyond Christian biblical exegesis with the publication in 1957 of Norman Cohn's seminal study, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Vittorio Lanternari's comparative study, *The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults* in 1960, and the 1962

collection of essays, *Millennial Dreams in Action: Studies in Revolutionary Religious Movements* edited by Sylvia Thrupp. More than four decades later, millennialism still is the subject of a wide and lively academic debate including and beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition and with numerous studies on millenarian currents in cultures as far and wide as Chinese, Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Pre-Columbian American, indigenous African, Latin American and Pacific Islands. The ancient cultures of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Zoroastrian Iran and Greece have been scrutinized for comparable notions of the End, and the highly diverse manifestations of millennialism in the Judeo-Christian world from ancient Hebrew to the Judeo-Hellenistic, to the Byzantine, medieval and early modern European, to modern American also have been subjects of major studies. Moreover, study of millennial themes in pictorial art, literature, music and cinema has generated a substantial body of scholarship. Today, the study of millennialism no longer stands out, as it once probably did, as an exorbitant, even embarrassing, fascination with the implausible and insignificant few on the fringes of the religious mainstream or anarchists seeking to destroy the consecrated social order. The participants in these movements are also not invariably seen as revolutionary expressions of the weak and the underprivileged. Rather, millennialism is now appreciated, as an influential current, or undercurrent, comprehensible on its own terms; modes of thought and action which, though too often skewed, suppressed or obliterated from the master narrative of any given culture, often leave recoverable traces in the subtext for today's students to reconstruct an alternative narrative.[3]

The comparative study of millennialism offers an intriguing prospect, yet it also poses insurmountable problems of epistemology and method. Questions of definition (e.g. what is millennialism versus apocalypticism?), the meaning of prophecy, and methods of textual analysis, even within an indigenous religio–cultural tradition, pose prohibiting complexities. And so does a comparative study of movements which gave historical substance to these millenarian aspirations. Any plan for putting together an extensive collection of essays on comparative millennialism has therefore been substantially modified in favour of a volume with a unifying theme of reasonable originality and plausibility; a theme which is not yet fully addressed in the current literature.[4] It was assumed that the Middle Eastern origins of apocalyptic/millennial motifs as well as their intricate interplay in indigenous settings, as varied as the ancient Middle East itself and twentieth-century America, offer such a realistic approach. These complementary themes, namely the paradigmatic origins of millennialism and the cultural interplay, also prove to be more compelling because of the rich heterogeneous apocalyptic traditions found in Zoroastrianism, Islam, Africa and China.

As would be expected, essays in this volume resonate methodological and

historiographic issues unique to the field. The book is organized into four parts: origins of millennialism, its formative period of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, its manifestation in the medieval and early modern periods, and its expressions in modern times. Like many studies on the origins of cultural phenomena, the volume starts in Ancient Mesopotamia. Benjamin R. Foster's essay (Chapter 1) on the notions of the End highlights a unique feature in Mesopotamian culture. Because of the deluge, a notion which later found its way into the Bible, the Mesopotamians perceived a post-apocalyptic world which had already ended in the remote past, an event which marked the beginning of the present. Nevertheless, as Foster points out, such a notion did not entirely eliminate eschatological beliefs or speculations about the future in ancient Mesopotamian writings.

The question of inadequate sources and problems of interpretation appear in a number of essays, especially in those concerned with the origins of millennialism. Robert R. Wilson's 'The Biblical Roots of Apocalyptic' (Chapter 3), for example, highlights the difficulty of studying apocalyptic texts in general, while Philip G. Kreyenbroek's 'Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition' (Chapter 2) raises the chronic problem of dating the Zoroastrian apocalyptics. This is also of inherent interest to John J. Collins in his essay, 'Eschatological Dynamics and Utopian Ideals in Early Judaism' (Chapter 4) because of the related problem of Zoroastrian influence on Jewish apocalyptic tradition.[5] Collins also draws attention to the apocalyptics of the Hebrew Bible and the Qumran documents whereby the mysterious and en-coded language of the prophecies is meant to persuade the adept to discern a hidden secret behind the text, a hermeneutical problem for the students of apocalypticism not limited to early Judaism. The difficulties of interpreting apocalyptics are also noticeable in Harold W. Attridge's 'The Messiah and the Millennium: The Roots of Two Jewish–Christian Symbols' (Chapter 5) and in Said Amir Arjomand's 'Messianism, Millennialism and Revolution in Early Islamic History' (Chapter 6). The heterogeneous and allusive symbolism of the Book of Revelation, Attridge notes, assigned to the Christian sectarians a mission of salvation in the imminent apocalyptic conflict with the evil. The tone and content of the early verses of the Qur'an, on the other hand, as well as other evidence in early Islamic sources addressed by Arjomand, present an apocalyptic perspective essentially at variance with the conventional exposition of Islamic origins.

These and similar exegetical and historiographical issues raised in other essays in this collection lead us to two essential points: first, that the study of millennialism, as contributions to this book show, has developed certain tools and techniques to recover from the text, and 'between the lines' so to speak, the suspect evidence usually not discernible in conventional methods of source

criticism. Yet unearthing what is buried in the text, especially what is generally considered as embarrassing or dangerous by the religious authorities, no matter how skilfully done, still leaves much room for divergence. Inevitably, the textual ambiguities persuaded students of millennialism to offer a multiplicity of at times contesting interpretations. Shahzad Bashir's 'Deciphering the Cosmos from Creation to Apocalypse: The Hurufiyya Movement and Medieval Islamic Esotericism' (Chapter 9); which focuses on the Hurufis of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, portrays a movement that sought alternative means to understand the secrets of the text, particularly through cabalistic preoccupation with letters of the Qur'an. This was an attempt to go beyond the established norms of interpretation by adopting a hermeneutical approach. In contrast, in his historiographical essay, 'Medieval Europe: Religious Enthusiasm and Social Change in the "Millennial Generation"' (Chapter 7), R. I. Moore provides an in-depth text analysis of the historical setting around the year 1000 CE in Europe raising questions concerning its very significance in stimulating the popular imagination in medieval Europe.[6]

Juan R. I. Cole in his 'Millennialism in Modern Iranian History' (Chapter 14), detects certain recurring features in the Iranian messianic tradition and underlines the need to comprehend their apocalyptic rhetoric. Similarly, David Ownby, in his 'Is There a Chinese Millenarian Tradition? An Analysis of Recent Western Studies of the Taiping Rebellion' (Chapter 13), makes a compelling case for the continuity of the indigenous Chinese apocalyptics and its own hermeneutics.[7] By contrast, Lamin Sanneh's essay, 'Comparative Millennialism in Africa: Continuities and Variations on the Canon' (Chapter 12), demonstrates that a community of interpretation could come about from a remarkable fusion of Islamic and Christian apocalyptic motifs.

Millennial hermeneutics, as Bernard McGinn's study (Chapter 8) of Catholic apocalypticism shows, persist even when this-worldly apocalypticism has been officially refuted by the Church. Undercurrents are still at work engendering visions which may have been influenced by the contemporary millennialism of the Reformation, yet essentially they convey a non-radical message supportive of the Catholic Church. The same conservative trends may also be observed in various manifestations of American millennialism. When tolerated as an article of faith, the repository of millennial rhetoric is wide open to its free-reining practitioners not only in the millennial theology of Jonathan Edwards and other speculative theologians, but more expressedly in Puritan movements of the nineteenth century, as shown by Stephen J. Stein's 'American Millennial Visions: Towards Construction of a New Archi-tectonic of American Apocalypticism' (Chapter 10). As Stein demonstrates, there is a consistent effort to play out America's 'Manifest Destiny' as an exceptional millennial reality of the New Jerusalem in the open frontiers of

the new continent. The same millennial rationale, however, finds a different articulation when a black slave prophet finds in the message of Christian apocalyptic a vision of insurgency. Richard Brodhead's 'Millennium, Prophecy and the Energies of Social Transformation: The Case of Nat Turner' (Chapter 11) offers a striking example of apocalyptic leadership. It is distinct not only from the Puritans and from the theologians of the Great Awakening, but also from evangelical prophets of the past two centuries ranging from the Millerites of the mid-nineteenth century to the Branch Davidians of the late twentieth as depicted in Paul Boyer's 'The Middle East in Modern American Popular Prophetic Belief' (Chapter 15). In the post-Cold War era, as Boyer shows, the apocalyptic rhetoric of the American evangelicals saw a new binary in the struggle between menacing Islam and the righteous Judeo-Christian forces.

It is perhaps stating the obvious to note that despite their wide range and diversity in approach, all essays in this volume were presented on a theme which, though admittedly ambiguous, was intrinsically specific enough to suggest to all contributors a set of interconnected ideas and actions. For the same reason no attempt has been made here to define clearly the often used terms such as apocalypticism, millennialism (or millenarianism). For a collection of essays, arriving at unanimity in terminology may prove cumbersome if not impossible.[8] In addition, the complicated texts pregnant with ambiguous symbolism and metaphors allow for a certain degree of interpretive flexibility which makes the study of millennialism a fascinating, and frustrating, exercise.

The textual enigmas have persuaded philologists, biblical, Zoroastrian and Islamic scholars to try to reconcile, or gloss over, inherent ambiguities and paradoxes in favour of an authoritative exegesis which would 'make sense'. Through this unavoidable, though often uninspiring, exercise the exclusive exegetical approach generally circumvents the hermeneutical subtleties, but also the historical context. The circumstances leading to the emergence of a given apocalyptic trend and its evolving course, if ever explored, arose because they were intended to provide additional clues to buttress the authoritative version rather than problematize it. The case in point is the modern Islamic Qur'anic scholarship which solely relies on the 'authoritative' narrative at the expense of the apocalyptic message of the early Meccan *sura*s.[9]

Second, when the socio-historical context of apocalypticism is addressed, increasingly in recent decades by social historians or by anthropologists and sociologists of religion, the focus is shifted from doctrinal expressions, namely what millenarians had said, to socio-economic factors conducive to the shaping of the movements and their evolving course. In contrast to philological and textual preoccupations, the objective here is to sift selectively through the ideas and aspirations of the claimants and their community of believers as a source for unravelling social hierarchies, political and anti-colonial grievances,

and economic disadvantages. Revolutionary movements with millenarian colouring, however, were often treated as typical of all millenarian movements, as a mode of social protest anticipating modern ideological and anti–imperialist currents of later times.

Both the textual scrutiny and socio–historical approach, however, seldom tried to study these currents in their totality or dealt with them in their own terms, though often they did pay homage to the idea. Most notably, the social–psychological interpretation of apocalypticism relied on the theories of relative deprivation and the trauma of sudden transition in order to address the complexity of the apocalyptic phenomenon. The theory of relative deprivation, as discussed by Wilson in this volume, offers the very perception of social, political and cultural depravity, whether real or perceived, as the prime motive for apocalyptic syndrome.[10] A corollary to this theory of apocalypticism is that of disaster and swift socio-economic displacements: the collapse of empires, as in the Zoroastrian apocalypticism of Iran; the rupture of a closely-knit social fabric, as in the experience of the Babylonian diaspora; the disrupting effects of the rapid industrial and technological revolutions, as in Europe of the nineteenth century; the intrusion of an alien culture or imposition of a colonial socio-economic regime, as in Latin America, Africa and the Islamic world.[11] Not denying the triggering effect of such factors, and their implications for the social composition and doctrinal formulation of these movements, still neither of the two theories takes sufficient account of the hermeneutical legacy, or legacies, on which millennial discourses were articulated. The experience of sharing the mysteries of the text and the signs of the End, expounding a certain rhetorical discourse, and taking part in a scripted course of action, are dimensions of a millennial rationale, what is at the heart of O'Leary's 'community of interpretation'.[12] Through memory or text, an apocalyptic experience retrieves an esoteric temporality, articulates its own rationale, and engenders a sense of adherence more compelling for the believers than any ulterior motive. Frequent recurrence of apocalyptic expressions within certain cultural settings – Judeo-Hellenistic, Perso-Shi'ite, American Protestant and Latin American Catholic, to name a few – may best be understood if the pivotal role of apocalyptic hermeneutics is seriously taken into account.[13]

Apocalyptic Dynamics in the Contemporary Context

It is not an exaggeration to suggest that millenarianism in its varied manifestations, whether progressive or regressive, allegorical or fundamentalist, has been an important vehicle for social protest and revolutionary fervour. In modern times, it has been observed, secularized millennialism also fuelled

revolutionary aspirants and rendered subtle undertones to ideologies as diverse as the Philosophy of Progress, the American and the French Revolutions, scientific positivism in the nineteenth century, Marxism and its various manifestations, and even fascism and Nazism. More recently, a variety of popular science-fiction and pseudo-scientific theories, and, more substantially, the environmental debates and critiques of technomania may be seen as examples of latent millennialism of our times. In most cases, it is true, the millennial paradigm remains a subtle undertone to secular ideologies not always acknowledged by those who pronounced or enacted it. Nearly all revolutionary visionaries of modern times, most notably Karl Marx, entertained utopian visions brimming with millennial aspirations of one form or another. Even more so, apocalyptic images and topoi influenced those artists, writers and futurists who, by invoking millennial fears and hopes, challenged the norms of their own time, and searched for alternatives.

As has often been noted, the first conscious passing of the *fin de siècle* at the turn of the twentieth century was viewed by Western intellectual and artistic communities with a mix of despair and optimism. Their fears, more than their hopes, were soon to be realized through the horrors of the new century. As it turned out, the twentieth century was better equipped than any other time in human history to simulate a catastrophic End. The artistic and literary sensibilities, as reflected in the *decadence* mood of the time, were highly prophetic of the imminent calamities. The two highly destructive world wars were followed by the fearsome anxieties of the nuclear age, the ideological revolutions with poignant utopian programmes, and with authoritarian regimes to brutally implement them. They all resuscitated apocalyptic paradigms.

The victims of many acts of genocide and mass violence in the twentieth century perceived their own experiences in apocalyptic terms. Most notably, the European Jewry and other victims of the Holocaust, placed in apocalyptic terms their experiences of rounding ups, killings, concentration camps, gas chambers, dislocation and exile. And ironically, so did the Nazi perpetrators of the Holocaust. They, too, pursued an apocalyptic End to their crimes of the Final Solution, a necessity to arrive at the pure and mighty utopia of the 'thousand-year Reich'. It was as though this most harrowing episode in contemporary history epitomized for generations to come an ultimate apocalyptic encounter between the vulnerable, the weak and the defenceless on the one hand, and the diabolic might of political ideologies on the other. Whether secular or otherwise in its origins, the anti-Semitism of the Nazi era took root in a long tradition of such sentiments in millenarian Europe of the Middle Ages and early modern times.

Desire for the absolute and the final through the sacrifice of expendable minorities, a programme of chiliastic scale, was shared by other ideologically-

driven leaders of the twentieth century. Stalin's classless paradise of the collective communes, Mao Tse-Tung's Great Leap Forward aiming rapidly to transform rural China into an industrial utopia, the Cambodian genocide perpetrated by Pol Pot and his associates to restore the state of peasant purity, and Khomeini's fierce imagining of pristine Islam through revolution and an atrocious war, all qualify as modern apocalyptic interludes. Mao capitalized on the Chinese rich millennial tradition to present himself as a messianic prophet whose launching of a Marxist revolution, the Great Leap and the Cultural Revolution were necessary stages on the way to a millennial utopia. Khomeini relied on a long Shi'i Iranian millennial legacy to portray himself as the Imam, only a precious step away from the Mahdi, to demonize the Shah as a pharaonic power, the old elite as idol-worshippers, and his greatest ideological enemy, the United States, as the Great Satan.

As a revolutionary ideology Marxism fully accommodated millennial aspirations. The doctrine of historical determinism offered a certain inevitability parallel to apocalyptic prophecies in any religious traditions. It promised an egalitarian paradise of plenty and of freedom of choice in which the divine will has been substituted with dialectical materialism and its progressive course in history. In articulating a utopian future, Marxism relied as much on German philosophical idealism with its roots in Protestant millennialism as on the socialist idealism of Saint-Simon and other nineteenth-century utopian prophets conscious of their Christian millennial past. Particularly in the writings of the young Marx, and before the days of 'scientific' socialism, a passionate tone of millennial utopianism is audible even though he sharply dismissed most other socialist trends of his time as philistine.

If anything in the Western bloc, and especially in the United States, could have matched the millenarian zeal of the communist revolutionaries, it was the anti-communist apocalyptic rhetoric of the Cold War and its corollary, the fear of nuclear exchange. The imagery of Doomsday, Armageddon and other biblical allusions readily available in the hellfire rhetoric of American evangelical preachers was grafted on to science-fiction imagery of the Evil Empire by popular writers, film-makers, military analysts, political commentators, conservative politicians, and ideologically-bent nuclear scientists. Ironically they shared their anxieties about the impending End of human civilization with the advocates of peace and coexistence. They, too, viewed the arms race and the proliferation of nuclear weapons as the road to an inevitable doomsday. The fact that ancient fears and hopes could be transported so placidly and effectively into a new setting and exploited for political and ideological ends, or for greater coexistence, testifies to the potency of apocalyptic motifs and their endurance in the face of a seemingly secularizing age.

In the post-Cold War era and eclipse of ideologies (or a lull perhaps), what

may be called apocalyptic anxieties subsided, though they hardly dissipated altogether. The field of future studies surely offers a variety of scenarios to bring out our worst apocalyptic fears but also our precious millennial hopes. Above all, a genuine fear of environmental catastrophes looms large. Global warming and depletion of the ozone layer, deforestation, desertification and erosion of the topsoil, scarcity of water resources, toxic pollution, and other ecological hazards are possibilities as grim as a nuclear exchange and as horrifying as the images of the Book of the Apocalypse. The growing economic gap between the rich and the poor, the 'technomania' that reigns supreme in the age of electronic communication and cyberspace, and recurring ethnic and religious conflicts, surely create an imbalance in, if not entirely spoiling, the vista of new millennial hopes.

It is reasonable to ask, therefore, if the prospect of a new millennial discourse is on the horizon. And if so, whether the issues addressed in an academic context are likely to have any bearing on it. The answer is by no means unambiguous. It is possible to suggest that the same intrinsic fears of the unknown that in the past engendered comparable apocalyptic imagining in Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions are still in effect, and are likely to remain so as long as the future poses unsettling questions. Often, though, these anxieties are less reliant, explicitly at least, on a divine agency to intervene vengefully against evil or compassionately on the side of the vulnerable and the good. The responsibility for a felicitous or a disastrous future seems to be resting more than ever on human shoulders rather than on the dictates of heaven. This gives a whole new meaning to the verse by the Persian poet, Hafiz:

> Heaven could carry not the entrusted pain,
> My lot was the burden, me, the insane.

The experiences of at least the past hundred years have taken the confidence, and the passion, out of the modern rationalism of the Enlightenment which once sneered at Christian millennialism but pursued its own millennial happiness. Even in the prosperous and powerful West, where globalism has become a reassuring politico-economic currency, voices of deconstruction and a post-modernist critique of reason are questioning the validity of what was once considered sacred and definite. At least in the realm of the humanities, attention to new cultural discourses, of imagining, unreason and uncertainty, the unaccounted and the subversive, of textual ambiguities, and of the persuasiveness of rhetorical arguments have become more prominent. A call for an end to the conventional study of venerable disciplines, the way they were categorized by positivist philosophies of the nineteenth century, may be seen as a revolutionary discourse of the End.

In thinking about the End, we may ask in conclusion, is apocalypticism tied to the very basic rhetoric of salvation religions? And if so, as this book attempts to demonstrate, does it hold a lasting sway over our cultural memory? It is fair to assume that perhaps the age of literal interpretation of the apocalypse, of the horrors and hopes of the Book of Revelation and of similar texts, is at its ebb. For all but the most fervent enthusiasts and fundamentalists on the fringe, such prophecies no longer inculcate a 'realistic' vision of the End. This is parting with a tradition of literal imagining which endured surprisingly long. Increasingly, however, believers have found in the allegorical reading of the biblical and Qur'anic prophecies, keys to the understanding of the troubling questions of their own times. Yet even symbolic readings of the apocalypse are unlikely to inspire prophetic impulses for new millenarian movements. Beyond the religious domain, though not necessarily detached from its memory, the paradigm of the End and the rhetoric of renewal seem likely to endure for as long as there are anxieties about the moral and material troubles ahead.

I

Origins

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Mesopotamia and the End of Time

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Benjamin R. Foster

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By the mid-nineteenth century, rediscovery of the ancient Near East had brought to light lost cities and a wealth of museum objects, as well as ancient written documents. These stretched back in date long before the Bible or the earliest known sources of classical antiquity. The ancient languages of Mesopotamia and Egypt could be read with some confidence by 1860.[1] Because events and personalities already known to European scholarship from classical texts and the Bible were referred to in some of these newly discovered, earlier documents, there was a vigorous reaction, taking at first two contrary directions.

Some scholars attached overweening importance to the Mesopotamian materials in particular because they seemed older and were much more voluminous than the Bible and came from roughly the same region of the world. In its fully developed form at the beginning of the twentieth century, the 'Babel und Bibel' argument held that biblical traditions, mythology, personalities and expression essentially derived from an assumed Mesopotamian astral religious tradition. Even John the Baptist became a Mesopotamian astral deity in disguise and the New Testament a late version of the Gilgamesh epic. Being thus secondary, biblical tradition lacked the religious authority that Christianity and Judaism had for centuries accorded it. The extremist forms of this position died a deserved death by the Second World War and are today of only antiquarian interest.[2]

A more moderate view held that the Hebrews or Israelites formed part of a larger cultural complex known in the nineteenth century as 'Semitic civilizations', sharing what were then considered 'Semitic' traits. These included an undeveloped thought pattern, owing to the supposed limitations of the Semitic languages; an intense personal approach to religion so that it dominated life to excess, a lack of reflective capacity, and no art.[3] The 'Semitic' traits were commonly contrasted to the Greeks' putative excellence in all these areas, and

the fashion grew of analysing the 'Hebraic' and the 'Hellenic' elements in European thought and belief.[4] The Semitic hypothesis was in many respects an updating and ostensibly scientific reworking of a more intuitive, some would say 'Romantic' approach of the latter half of the eighteenth century, exemplified, for instance, by the lucubrations of von Herder. To him, the Hebrew Bible was a document portraying the 'childhood' of the human race; his Semites were rather like Dresden shepherds and shepherdesses disporting themselves at the dawn of humanity in a sort of Eden-like innocence.[5] But by the 1880s the early Israelites had been converted into something like gruff but expressive Bedouin.[6] In short, the early Jews turned into modern Arab nomads. The Babylonians, with their urban civilization, did not fit this picture well; the Semitist William Wright compared the Babylonian language contemptuously to colloquial Arabic and may have viewed Mesopotamian culture in somewhat the same way, as true Semites had to be nomads.[7]

The consequence of both these approaches was that ancient Mesopotamia was viewed in the early twentieth-century academy as the earliest phase of a historical continuum that included the Bible, passed through Greece and Rome and thence into the Middle Ages of the Latin-speaking world. This bypassed both Islam, which was considered derivative and Semitic and thus of no interest, and Byzantium, which was considered a kind of perpetual decadent imitation of the classical world overlaid with barbarous oriental Christianity – the true classical world lay dormant until rediscovered by Latin Europe. Pride of place in promoting Mesopotamia to a significant role in the English-speaking historical world goes to James Breasted, whose 'great white race' that created civilization included Europeans, the Mediterranean peoples, and the Semites, but excluded, specifically and on what he considered good authority, the Far East and sub-Saharan Africa.[8] In Breasted's time, inclusion of Mesopotamia in history, along with Greece and Rome, was seen as a dramatic step forward and he was justly proud of it, though we squirm when we read his book today. Syria was still considered an illiterate cultural crossroads without much originality.

This explains why it has become normative in any inquiry to have an ancient Near Eastern proemium, however sketchy or far-fetched the connections may seem. Even Karl Marx felt the necessity to begin his study of human economy with the ancient Near East.[9] More recently, Norman Cohn has produced a couple of chapters on ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt in a study of the origins of millennial thought, concluding that the Mesopotamians, like the Egyptians, were incapable of 'imagining that the world could ever be made perfect, and immutable in its perfection. Fantasies of cosmos without chaos were not for them.'[10] Perhaps one could phrase the matter differently; as the Assyriologist von Soden wrote about Babylonian ideas of

divine justice, they are 'still impressive today for their lack of illusion and their dispensing with facile self-deceit'.[11]

The evidence for eschatology in Mesopotamia is late by the standards of a culture that could write by the end of the fourth millennium, for it dates to the periods of Achaemenid and Macedonian domination, that is, after the last quarter of the sixth century BCE. This makes it tempting to associate eschatological thought in Mesopotamia with discontent and protest at a new order imposed by a seemingly invincible foreign power, as has often been alleged for Jewish and Christian eschatology.[12] A narrow definition of eschatological thought would concentrate on a notion of a fixed period of time for human history, with a clear and identifiable end, to which was added, especially in later Christianity, a calendrical dimension, using dates according to the Christian era instead of certain periods of time (hence 'millennialism').[13] Another aspect of eschatological thought, narrowly defined, is a message of hope that good will be rewarded and evil punished, or, at least, the world will be remade so as to justify a specific religious belief in the face of greater, non-believing political and military power. In the light of these definitions, the Mesopotamian evidence is scanty but suggestive.

A *locus classicus* is a passage in the Roman writer Seneca, claiming to quote Berossus, a Babylonian scholar who wrote a book in Greek about Babylonian astrology, history and culture in the early third century BCE. This work is lost except for quotations, allusions and summaries in various classical and early medieval writers, some based directly on his work, most, like Seneca's, indirect citations to summaries or quotations by others. Seneca describes Berossus's teaching as follows: 'All that the earth inherits will, he assures us, be consigned to flame when the planets, which now move in different orbits, all assemble in Cancer, so arranged in one row that a straight line may pass through their spheres. When the same gathering takes place in Capricorn, then we are in danger of the deluge.'[14] Since no reference to such a belief has been identified in any Mesopotamian source, and since the doctrine of planetary spheres was not part of Mesopotamian astronomy, most scholars of Mesopotamian cultures would consider this passage insufficient evidence for the existence of a Babylonian idea of the end of the world.[15] It is not, therefore, presented in conventional discussions of Mesopotamian religion, which seldom even mention eschatology.[16]

Considerably more attention has been given to a small group of late documents usually called 'prophecies' or 'apocalypses'. These refer to future events in veiled language, some of which seem to have to do with Achaemenid and Hellenistic rulers. A passage from one of these reads as follows: 'Another king will arise, but this time in [the city] Uruk. He will bring justice to the land and restore the gods, sanctuaries, fortifications, and prosperity of Uruk.

The preceding king's son will arise in Uruk and the empire. His reign will be established forever. [The kings?] of Uruk will exercise dominion like the gods.'[17] This fits a narrow definition of eschatological thought to the extent that it foretells an era of triumph for the city Uruk, which had not known an independent dynasty for at least ten centuries when this text was written. The phrase 'established forever' is a cliché of Mesopotamian royalty so should not be construed as a prediction of eternal life. This passage, as well as the group of texts it belongs to, suggests that there was in fact a Mesopotamian background to Jewish apocalyptic, originating perhaps in Babylonia under Achaemenid rule, even as a protest to it, and continuing into the Hellenistic period.[18] Enough is known of the cultural life of this fascinating period of Mesopotamian history to show that it is a serious blunder to consider it a feeble afterglow of the Mesopotamian civilization of a millennium earlier. It is also a priori unlikely that people believed the same things in Babylon in the sixth century BCE as they had in the sixteenth. But we may still adhere to our position that eschatology was a late development in Mesopotamia, possibly a consequence of foreign rule, and then ask a more difficult question: why not earlier? What dynamic of earlier phases of Mesopotamian culture tended to exclude eschatology? What might a Mesopotamian scholar of the late second millennium BCE, for example, have said if someone asked him if the world would end and, if so, how and when?

His answer might surprise a modern student: the world had already ended in the remote past and that marked the beginning of the present. Mesopotamian thought and tradition knew of an all-embracing catastrophe, the deluge.[19] The discovery of a Mesopotamian deluge story, with unmistakable similarities to the biblical flood story, was, in fact, the beginning of European preoccupation with ancient Mesopotamia. Various versions of the story are now known in the Akkadian language, the earliest from about the seventeenth century BCE, the latest from manuscripts of the seventh century BCE, which probably preserve a text from late in the second millennium.[20]

According to the earliest full version,[21] the deluge was sent by the gods to obliterate the human race. Thanks to the intervention of a sympathetic deity, a flood hero and his wife survived by building a large boat and taking aboard various animals (a later version includes craftsmen to keep alive knowledge of the arts). The deluge wiped out the entire human race and all traces of civilization. In the terror and confusion of the deluge, the gods recognized that this measure had been too drastic. In its aftermath, when they found themselves hungry and thirsty, the gods regretted that their human subjects were gone, as there was no one to provide for their needs, to feed, clothe, house, and entertain them. Therefore the human race was allowed to re-populate the earth, but death was ordained for all humans, as well as periodic

measures to reduce population on a larger scale, such as famine, plague and ravening beasts. In addition, the birth rate was reduced by ordaining human infertility and establishing social prohibition of child-bearing to certain classes of women, such as priestesses.

The Mesopotamians viewed human life before the deluge as different. The correlation of biological with calendrical time was vastly slower. Human beings lived to enormous ages, not with conventional childhoods and adulthoods and long old ages, but rather with all stages of life more leisurely – a baby might be in nappies for a century, for example.[22] Life was better then because it lasted longer. In their literature Babylonians sometimes suggested that life went by too quickly. The idea that remote antiquity embraced long periods without important cultural changes is familiar to the modern historian, who tends to think of more than 99 per cent of human history as relatively stable in terms of population, material culture and subsistence patterns. To the Babylonian historian, the rhythm of time and life were different, and seemed faster, with the recession of the deluge.

Another characteristic of the Mesopotamian view of most ancient life was that there was once less conflict of interest between humans and beasts than in the present, or, in some versions, there were no baneful beasts in the world at all:

> In those days, there being no snakes, no scorpions,
> No hyenas, no lions, no dogs, no wolves,
> Neither fear nor terror:
> Humanity had no enemy![23]

Less conflict may have taken place among human beings, as in most ancient times the human race was less diverse: people had been mostly like the Mesopotamians but had later branched out with their own languages and gods.

The author of the early version of the deluge story, presenting it as the early history of the human race, proposed an original solution to the question as to why the world changed with a sudden catastrophe. Life was in fact too long and too productive. The teeming masses of the human race raised such a clamour that the gods could not sleep. This robust and ironic literary treatment of the deluge scarcely accords with the narrow definitions of millennial thought offered above. First, the final consummation took place in the past. Second, the human race barely survived, but without justification or moral improvement, just recognition of its utilitarian importance to the gods. Third, the flood is clearly understood, at least in the later version, to be a one-time event, never to recur. There was no waiting for a second flood and computing the time until it would occur. Fourth, no era of bliss followed.

Thereafter, as the Babylonian author saw it, people had to die in an orderly and prompt manner or be periodically wiped out in large numbers; there were also whole groups of people who could not or were not allowed to reproduce themselves. Humanity worked to maintain the gods, who lived for ever in idleness and petty intrigues. The blissful elect had already died long ago.

One must avoid, however, any paradigm in which Mesopotamians looked towards the past, without hope, while Christians look towards the future, with hope. In fact, the Mesopotamians were intensely interested in the future and turned their finest scholarly and scientific talents towards understanding and even manipulating it.[24] But they proceeded from an understanding of the present that modern readers have struggled to come to terms with. Human civilization was not a product of human history or even occasional divine interventions. Rather, major human institutions, such as agriculture, urban life, arts and crafts, scholarship, religious practice, or authoritarian rule, were given to the human race before the deluge and remained essentially stable through time. To the Sumerians, this meant that human institutions were defined by individual, abstract, differentiated powers controlled by the gods. To the Babylonians, human institutions were designed or planned by the gods and laid down for the human race in fully developed form.[25] People could ignore or forget them but they were there to be rediscovered.

Therefore, the discontinuities between gods and humans were those of mortality and inferior human powers and intelligence in opposition to immortality, unlimited powers and superior wisdom and understanding belonging to the gods.[26] The life patterns, needs, policies and material culture of the divine and mortal spheres were comparable. Since the physical world was part of a cosmos constructed, arranged and controlled by the gods, its order could but seldom be at fundamental variance with their purposes, and so destruction of the world was not envisaged.[27] Nor should we expect the flood to be a universal boundary in Mesopotamian thought. The Babylonian Epic of Creation, for example, ends before the flood, considering the organization of the universe and the construction of Babylon the main events of history.[28] In any case, the present was a product of stable, god-given institutions and short-lived human endeavours.

Turning to the future, we find that Mesopotamian texts addressed to human beings of ages to come assume a cultural horizon similar to that of the time the text was written: Babylonian kings will still repair temples and public buildings and remember with honour their predecessors. There will be good and bad times and different cities and dynasties will rule the land.[29] But there will always be a land and cities and dynasties, without significant social or technological changes, far into the future.

Mesopotamian culture makes ample reference to a belief in destiny, determined by the gods at birth, even written on a sublime tablet.[30] The gods vouchsafed glimpses of destiny in both everyday and extraordinary occurrences and in response to queries and technical procedures carried out by professional scholars.[31] Aspects of destiny could be averted or manipulated through rituals, though the ultimate destiny, death, could not be avoided. In a culture that placed strong emphasis on destiny, the past, in which destiny was decided, will be the same as the future, in which destiny is acted out. A person will live towards his past, hence the future is what lies behind him, or one could say that his future has already happened.[32] If one accepts this idea, or a variation of it, then one can hope to discover the future from the present and past, as they form a seamless whole. Mesopotamian hope for the future, therefore, centred on the possibilities of manipulating or swaying destiny, by changing behaviour and carrying out apotropaic procedures sold by experts.

We cannot create a false symmetry by asserting that the Mesopotamians had millennialism reversed, that people were seeking an era of bliss by burrowing into the past. Informed imitation of the past was a virtue, but this is so widespread in human communities that it would not make the Babylonians into millenarians. Furthermore, the crucial line between past and present, the deluge, could not be crossed. When the Mesopotamian hero-king Gilgamesh decided that he was man enough to try to cross this boundary and find the secret of immortal life, the flood hero scoffs at his venture, 'Who then will call the gods to assembly for your sake, that you may find the eternal life you seek?'[33] He does, however, allow Gilgamesh to bring back to the human race the story of the flood, which otherwise would have remained unknown, since there was no one else to recount it. There is no hope for anyone beyond the normal life-span (even if courtesy required wishing kings an everlasting reign, as in the prophecy concerning Uruk quoted above).

Having considered what happened in the remote past, we may turn to Mesopotamian speculations about the far future, which to Mesopotamians meant what happens after death. This too has a bearing on the possibilities for eschatological beliefs. Death held no promise of a better world, rather, a worse one, permanent incarceration in a dark, dusty place, languishing in eternal hunger and thirst unless one's descendants remembered to make food offerings. Such joys as were to be attained were decidedly of this life. Death was the end of everything about a human being that was attractive or worth experiencing.[34]

Here too the *Epic of Gilgamesh* makes Gilgamesh mediator of after-death experience to the human race. His friend, Enkidu, has a terrifying vision of the netherworld in Tablet VII, in which people looked like birds and had nothing to eat but dirt and dust. Furthermore, some ancient scholar appended

to the story a partial translation of a Sumerian poem about a journey of Enkidu to the netherworld, so the Epic was certainly read as a source for accounts of life after death. Other texts were no less depressing on the subject; an Assyrian visitant to the netherworld reacts as follows:

> He cried out a lament, saying, 'Woe is me!'
> He darted out into the street like an arrow,
> > and scooped up dirt from alley and square in his mouth,
> > all the while setting up a frightful clamor,
> > 'Woe! Alas! Why have you ordained this for me?'[35]

A keen student of early second-millennium Mesopotamian society, F. R. Kraus, tried to recapture what it was like to lead a Babylonian life at the time the early version of the story of the deluge we have been referring to was first set to clay.[36] He was struck by the sharp limitations of Babylonian curiosity and interest. Of the thousands of Babylonians who travelled about the Near East, not one wrote even a single line about what he saw. The heroes a Babylonian read about in school struggled and died, caught up in great events, such as the deluge, they could hardly comprehend, much less control. A Babylonian's commentary on change was that it was for the worse. In that period, a Babylonian's preoccupation and his hero were, in fact, his world and himself. Nor was there any basis for imagining a different world, much less a better one. If he thought about it at all, the Babylonian might say that the better world was long over with.

A natural response to a stable world and a short hazardous life could be fatalism:

> O my father, you built a house, raised high the door,
> The storehouse is sixty cubits wide,
> What did you take from it?
> The loft of your house, as much as the storehouse, is full of grain,
> But on the day of your death they will count out only nine loaves
> > and put them by your head![37]

Frantic enjoyment of life could also be a reaction:

> Where is Gilgamesh, who sought eternal life like the survivor of the flood?
> Where are the great kings from former days till now?
> They will not be begotten again, they will not be born again!
> How far did a life without glamor transcend death?
> Fellow, I will teach you who your god truly is,
> Cast down unhappiness in triumph, forget despair,
> Let one day of happiness make up for 36,000 years of despair!

Let the beer goddess rejoice over you as if you were her own child,
That is the duty of mankind![38]

For some, though, the modest domestic pleasures were enough:

> Gilgamesh, wherefore do you wander?
> The eternal life you are seeking you shall not find.
> When the gods created mankind,
> They established death for mankind,
> And withheld eternal life for themselves.
> As for you, Gilgamesh, let your stomach be full,
> Always be happy, night and day.
> Make every day a delight,
> Night and day play and dance.
> Your clothes should be clean,
> Your head should be washed,
> You should bathe in water.
> Look proudly on the little one holding your hand,
> Let your mate be always blissful in your loins,
> This, then, is the work of mankind.[39]

The Babylonians' response to reality was clearly no less varied than those of other peoples and fits no neat pattern.

A sense of alienation, impotence, or protest within human society often associated with eschatology seems largely absent from Mesopotamian thought, unless it can be seen in the eras of Achaemenid and Macedonian rule, when periods of repression occurred. There is also little sense that the human race could somehow draw closer to the gods or achieve a world more compatible with individuals' sense of justice and fairness. Mesopotamians thought deeply about human suffering and wrote about it at length, debating whether or not the gods cared about it and why seemingly unnecessary human suffering could occur in a world supposedly controlled by gods who were expected to reward just deeds.[40] Various answers were offered but none of these envisaged a world without suffering or one that would be perfectly just in terms of conventional religious beliefs. To this extent a Babylonian might have considered eschatological dreams absurd, based on the experiences of real life, and possibly blasphemous, as human beings were scarcely in a position to redesign the world. As a Babylonian cynic enjoined, 'Go up on the ancient ruin heaps and walk around, look at the skulls of the lowly and great. Which was the doer of evil, and which was the doer of good deeds?'[41]

Eschatology, therefore, if the term is to be used, was narrowly focused on human experience after death. The 'Last Things' were individually experi-

enced but the same for all. The universal moment of reckoning, however, lay in the past. Mesopotamians, therefore, described highest knowledge, the alpha and omega, to be knowledge of what occurred before the deluge and after death. In this symmetry, the death of the world was in the past and only a person's individual death lay in the future.

Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition

Philip G. Kreyenbroek

In the 1920s R. Reitzenstein, a classicist whose views helped to shape the academic approach to the study of religion in his time,[1] claimed that Hellenistic apocalyptic literature, and underlying earlier Greek and Platonic ideas, were strongly influenced by ancient Iranian teachings.[2] A central point of his argument was that the myth or legend[3] of a sequence of deteriorating ages each of which is associated with a metal, found in the work of the early Greek poet Hesiod, also forms part of the Iranian tradition. Reitzenstein's principal Iranian source was the *Zand-i Wahman Yasn*, which received its final redaction in written form in the ninth or tenth century CE, but which the German scholar nevertheless held to represent a very ancient Iranian tradition.

Long before Reitzenstein's time, the parallel between the biblical Book of Daniel 2: 31–45 and the account of the 'metallic ages' found in the *Zand-i Wahman Yasn* had been noted,[4] and some scholars thought that the biblical passage depended on the tradition represented by the Iranian text.

As a result of the prominence of such ideas in the views of historians of religion in earlier decades, both the *Zand-i Wahman Yasn* and the concept of 'apocalyptic' traditions came to play a greater role in the study of Zoroastrian teachings on future world history, millennialism and eschatology, than might otherwise have been the case. In fact, while few modern Iranists would now subscribe to the crucial premise that the myth of the 'metallic ages' is of ancient Iranian origin,[5] a special interest in the question as to whether or not Zoroastrian teaching inspired Mediterranean and Near Eastern apocalyptic traditions continues to inform the scholarly debate down to the present.[6]

Not only has this had the effect of unduly narrowing the focus of Iranian studies in the field of millennialism and eschatology, but it has in some cases threatened to distort these studies, since general definitions of apocalypticism

based largely on other traditions were used prescriptively in the interpretation of the Zoroastrian sources.[7] The range of questions and topics relevant to such a restricted treatment of the ancient Iranian tradition, moreover, would now seem to have been examined from all sides without bringing specialists closer to a consensus.

It may therefore be more profitable at this stage to seek to understand ancient Iranian ideas about eschatology and millennialism within the context of Zoroastrianism, and its textual tradition, as a whole. In tracing the possible development of eschatological and millenarian ideas there, some emphasis will be laid on one of the distinguishing characteristics of this tradition, namely the fact that writing played at most a minor role there until well into the Islamic era. While it is recognized in most modern publications on Zoroastrianism that the tradition is based on long oral transmission, the practical implications of this are often ignored.

A Survey of Zoroastrian Beliefs on Eschatology and Millennialism

The most elaborate account of the Zoroastrian teachings on the creation, progress and end of the world are found in the 'Pahlavi Books',[8] works that were written down in their final redaction in the ninth and tenth centuries CE, in most cases after a long period of oral transmission. The accounts they contain thus represent Zoroastrian teachings as they have developed until then, i.e. essentially in their final form.[9] The essential elements of the history and future of the world as described there are as follows.[10]

Cosmogony and eschatology: their moral purpose and implications   In the beginning God (Pahlavi [Phl.] Ohrmazd; Avestan [Av.] Ahura Mazda,[11] 'Lord Wisdom'), created the world because, being all-good and omniscient, he was aware of the presence in the universe of his antagonist, the evil Ahriman (Av. Angra Mainyu, 'Evil Spirit'). At that stage the universe was a-dynamic, nothing moved and time did not exist. Ohrmazd knew that it would be impossible to rid the universe of Ahriman unless the forces of good and evil could do battle in a dynamic world which was limited as to both time and place.

Ohrmazd therefore created the world, first in an ideal, non-material state; then in material, but still ideal, form. This ideal world was contained by the sky as the contents of an egg in its shell. Inside this 'egg' the earth – small and flat – floated on a limited mass of water; on it stood one bull, one plant and a single human. Thus six of the seven 'creations' (man, animal, plant, metal, water, earth) were present in the ideal material creation.[12] The seventh,

fire, may have been represented by the sun, but does not appear to be mentioned in this context.[13] Fire, which was thought to make movement possible, is said to have entered the world when its dynamic stage began.[14]

Time had been created at this stage, but did not progress, and the sun always stood at its zenith. In order to be armed for battle Ohrmazd had created seven[15] divine helpers, the Amesha Spentas or 'beneficent immortals': 'Beneficent Spirit'; 'Righteousness'; 'Good Thought'; 'Beneficent Devotion'; 'the Power that should be chosen';[16] 'Wholeness'; and 'Immortality'. Each of these in a sense represents an 'abstract' force that is operative in the universe and also has a connection with a material 'creation'.[17]

Ahriman, whose first attempt to conquer the world had been repulsed, created his own demons (Phl. *dew*; Av. *daeva*) and evil creatures.[18] All creations except man have the inherent nature of their creator, which means that beings belonging to Ohrmazd can only be good and creatures of Ahriman have no choice but to be wicked. Man, however, is capable of moral choice and thus of playing a crucial role in the cosmic drama by aiding and strengthening the side of his choice.[19]

At the end of the ideal material state Ormazd is said to have celebrated a religious ceremony (*yasna*), and to have invited the eternal part of human souls (*fravashi*) to enter the world of 'Mixture' (viz. between good and evil) that was to come, in order to contribute to the fight against evil. The *fravashis* agreed to the invitation to come to the world.[20]

The world of Mixture – the dynamic phase of world history during which good and evil are mixed and time progresses – then began with a successful attack by Ahriman on Ohrmazd's ideal world. Ahriman entered the shell–like sky and proceeded to kill or spoil all that was in it: where there was light he brought darkness, sweet water he turned briny, and he polluted fire with smoke; he further pounded the first plant and killed the first bull and man. For a short time he appeared to be victorious, but then Ohrmazd's creations began to act according to their inherent nature, which meant fighting against evil and pollution. From the first plant, animal and man sprang all species of good living beings, and eventually the world became as we know it: with birth and death, night and day, sweet and salt water, good and dangerous animals, plains and mountains, and the forces of evil pitted against those of good.

Although the fact that the world was in essence created by Ohrmazd is taken to mean that it must eventually return to its true nature, it is never-theless implied in many Zoroastrian texts that this ideal state cannot come about without the active cooperation of man. In fact the entire Zoroastrian system of ethics is based upon the concept of human choice, and its con-sequences. Given the Zoroastrian view of the world of Mixture, it is clear that the good cannot automatically expect to be rewarded in this life. Zoroastrianism

teaches that justice will come after death, when the individual soul will face a judgment at the 'Bridge of the Separator', and will either be rewarded by heavenly bliss, or expiate its sins in hell.[21] After death, a person's existence is thus once more a 'spiritual' one.

Eventually, however, when the world has almost fulfilled its function as an arena and evil will be sufficiently weakened, the process leading to the 'Renovation' will begin. That term (Phl. *Frashegerd*; Av. *frasho-kereti*, which perhaps means 'making perfect'),[22] denotes a renewed non-dynamic, timeless and ideal state, but one in which all evil has been eliminated from the world and all men will be restored to physical life (the *tan i pasen* or 'final body'). The process begins with the appearance of the Saviour (Saoshyant), born of a virgin who will conceive when bathing in a lake where Zarathustra's 'essence' is preserved.[23]

The Saoshyant will bring about the Resurrection, and will hold an assembly of all men and women in which they will realize their good and wicked deeds. There will be a Final Judgment and those to whom sin still clings will undergo another short period of punishment in hell (this time not as spirits but in the material body), while the righteous will again enjoy the delights of paradise.

Then all the metal contained in the mountains of the earth will be melted. A river of molten metal will thus be formed, through which all men must pass; for those who are free of sins, this will be like a bath in warm milk, but those whose sins have not been completely atoned for will experience a fierce burning. All men, thus cleansed, will then meet together and praise Ohrmazd.

Ohrmazd and the good divine beings will seize their evil opponents and ultimately defeat them. First the Saoshyant will celebrate a religious ceremony (*yasna*), after which the divine beings will engage in the final battle, which will drive out the powers of evil for ever. After this Ohrmazd himself will perform a final *yasna*.

Then the mountains will be razed, and *Frashegerd* will begin.[24]

The millennia An important subsidiary theme in Middle Persian and later accounts of the history of the universe is formed by speculations on the time-frame within which this history is expected to take place. The significant units of time in these speculations are periods of 1,000 and 3,000 years.[25] The figure most often given in the Pahlavi Books is that of 12,000 years. Elsewhere, including in early non-Iranian sources, the figure of 9,000 years is found, which may indicate that the 3,000-year period of ideal spiritual existence did not play a role in earlier speculations.[26] According to this millenary scheme, the history of the world proceeds as follows:

Pre-eternity: Orhmazd is aware of the potential threat of Ahriman, and of the need to create the world in order to render him powerless.

0–3,000: First there are 3,000 years of spiritual creation, in which the creations remained in a non-material, motionless state.[27] This period ends with a first aborted attempt by Ahriman to enter the creation of Ohrmazd. Ohrmazd first offers Ahriman peace on condition that the evil one will subject himself to him, but this is refused. A pact is then agreed upon, whereby the two forces will do battle for the next 9,000 years.[28] Ohrmazd chants the Ahunawar prayer, the holiest of all sacred utterances of Zoroastrianism. When Ahriman hears those sacred words he falls back into the darkness, where he remains inactive for 3,000 years.

3,000–6,000: This marks the beginning of the second 3,000 years, in which Ohrmazd – unhampered by the antagonism of Ahriman – first creates time,[29] then the Amesha Spentas,[30] and subsequently fashions the rest of his creation in material form.[31] Although Ahriman is generally said to have been inactive, it is also stated that he created his own evil creatures during this period.[32] At the end of this period, Ormazd performs a 'spiritual *yasna*',[33] and invites the *fravashis* ('souls', see above) to come to the world of Mixture.

6,000–9,000: The next 3,000 years begin with a successful attack by Ahriman, and end with the appearance of Zarathustra. Time begins to progress and eventually the world becomes as we know it. The rest of this period, from a Zoroastrian point of view, is quintessentially pre-history, a time when legendary heroes had their being. It is, somewhat vaguely, subdivided into three millennia:[34]

> 6,000–7,000: The first 1,000 years witnessed the effects of Ahriman's attack and some legendary exploits.

> 7,000–8,000: During the second 1,000 years the wicked Azhdahak ruled until he was finally imprisoned by the hero Fredon.

> 8,000–9,000: The following millennium saw many of the deeds and battles which are described in the Iranian heroic legends.[35]

9,000–12,000: The third period of 3,000 years then follows, beginning with Zarathustra and destined to end with *Frashegerd*. This period was naturally of particular interest to Zoroastrians, as it includes the present age. Many different traditions about it may have existed side by side before the demands of a written tradition forced the compilers to impose a sort of unity. Thus, in some Pahlavi sources, the period is not only divided into three millennia, but the first of these, Zarathustra's millennium, is further subdivided into four (or seven) deteriorating 'metallic ages':

> 9,000–10,000: The first millennium began with Zarathustra's revelation. Supported by his royal patron, Vishtaspa, Zarathustra brought the

Zoroastrian religion to the world. During Vishtaspa's reign there were
terrible wars with unbelievers. His reign was followed by those of other
kings, including the last of the Achaemenians (on the historical figures see
below), who was defeated by the evil rule of Alexander. Then the Parthian
kings reigned, followed by the Sasanians, until the last scion of that house
was forced to flee before the wicked Arabs.[36]

From then on calamity is destined to follow calamity, and Iran will be
overrun by various wicked aliens. Towards the end of this period the
wonder-working Wahram will appear, who will restore the Zoroastrian
religion[37] and will help to prepare the world for the coming of the first of
Zarathustra's miraculously-born sons. Wahram's coming is followed by the
reappearance of Peshotan, the son of Zarathustra's patron Vishtaspa. Until
then Peshotan has dwelt in a mysterious place. He will also help to defeat
the forces of evil.

9,000–10,000 subdivided: According to a group of traditions, Zara-
thustra's millennium will in turn see four or seven deteriorating epochs.
The four are: a *golden* age belonging to Zarathustra and Vishtaspa; a
silver age, which belongs to the first Sasanian; a *steel* age, viz. that of the
pious, late Sasanian king Khusraw of immortal soul; and an age of '*iron
mixed with clay*',[38] when the world will be dominated by evil people and
wicked demons.

In the alternative tradition, the seven deteriorating ages are: *gold* –
King Vishtaspa; *silver* – Kay Ardasher; *copper* – Ardasher, the first
Sasanian; *brass* – the Parthian Kings; *lead* – the Sasanian King Wahram
Gor; *steel* – Khusraw of immortal soul; *iron mixed with clay* – the
demons.[39]

10,000–11,000: Wahram and Peshotan are, in a way, the forerunners of
Ushedar, the first of Zarathustra's saviour-sons.[40] Like Zarathustra he will
receive a revelation from Ohrmazd and bring this to the people. The sun
will stand still at the zenith of the sky for ten days and nights. Drought
and affliction will diminish, prosperity and peace will increase. Trees will
be green for three years. Rivers and springs will flow again. The wolf
species will disappear for ever, and the effectiveness of medicines will be
such that none will die of illness.

Towards the end of this millennium, however, the sorcerer Malkus,
who belongs to the family of Zarathustra's murderer, will bring torrential
rain, hail and snow for three years, causing much destruction.[41] According
to one source,[42] Peshotan will appear to counteract the demonic Arabs,
Turks and Romans, who will once more become dominant.

11,000–12,000: Then Ushedarmah, the second of Zarathustra's saviour-

sons will appear, according to some sources with Peshotan as his priestly counsellor.[43] Ushedarmah will receive a revelation from Ohrmazd. The sun will stand still at the zenith of the sky for twenty days and nights. Serpents will be destroyed. Trees will remain green for six years. Hunger and thirst will diminish. Cattle will give much milk; people will first give up eating meat and then drinking milk. Joy and righteousness will increase.

Towards the end of the millennium Azhdahak, who has been imprisoned since the second millennium after Ahriman's attack (see under 7,000–8,000), will escape and cause great destruction. The legendary hero Keresasp will be brought back to life in order to slay him.[44]

12,000-12,057: Then the Saoshyant, Astvat-ereta, will come from Lake Kayansih, and the process leading to *Frashegerd* will commence. The sun will stand still for thirty days and nights. Plants will be green for ever, and joy will reign. All forms of evil, such as illness and death, will vanish from the world, and the Resurrection will begin (for details see above), followed by the cleansing stream of molten metal, the Saoshyant's *yasna*, the final battle between the forces of good and evil; Ohrmazd's final *yasna*, and the levelling of the mountains.

12,057: With this the Renovation is achieved.[45]

Moral message and millenary scheme The sources reflect no awareness of any logical or doctrinal contradiction between the idea that the fate of the world largely depends on men's moral choices, and this millennial scheme which seems to imply that even the details of the eventual outcome of the cosmic battle are preordained. Nor is an explanation offered for the apparent discrepancy between the expectation that the righteous will gradually but steadily rid the world of evil, and the prediction that things will go downhill from the appearance of one saviour-figure until the next. A compromise between these schemes has apparently been reached by describing the appearance of Zarathustra's first two saviour-sons as causing great improvements which are then in some measure counteracted by renewed manifestations of evil.

On the History of the Zoroastrian Religion and its Textual Tradition

Pre-history, Zarathustra, the *Gathas* Zarathustra (Greek [Gk.] *Zoroastrès*), the founder of the Zoroastrian faith, was in all probability a priest who was highly trained in the religious tradition of the Indo-Iranians. His ritual and visionary activities, it seems, led him to make claims that brought him into

conflict with powerful elements in his surroundings, and caused his followers to be regarded as a distinct group, and eventually as followers of a separate religious tradition. There has been much debate in the past over Zarathustra's date; most modern scholars hold that he flourished around 1,000 BCE, or slightly earlier. This probably implies that the Prophet lived before the Iranian peoples had settled in the areas they now inhabit; it is thought that he belonged to one of the peoples who later settled in the eastern part of the Iranian territory.

Whatever the uncertainties as to Zarathustra's exact date and place, there is no doubt that he lived in pre-historical times, i.e. before his people began to make use of writing. Nevertheless, the text of the *Gathas*, a group of hymns attributed to Zarathustra, have been transmitted almost exactly as the Prophet must have recited them. Presumably because of their status as especially sacred texts, they seem to have been memorized word-for-word, or indeed syllable by syllable, so that they did not change along with the living language as other parts of the early religious tradition did.[46]

The early centuries of Zoroastrianism, the non-Gathic texts While Zarathustra's *Gathas* formed the core of the religious tradition of the nascent Zoroastrian faith, its early tradition probably included many other texts, not least the *Yashts* or hymns to the divine beings. The core of many of these texts may have been composed long before Zarathustra's time, but it is clear that additions were made to them in the course of the history of Zoroastrianism and it seems possible that passages which were frowned upon by adherents of the new religion were simply dropped.[47] The whole corpus of religious texts in this Old Iranian language later came to be known as the Avesta; for want of a better term its language is called Avestan.

The Achaemenians (559–331 BCE), and the fixation of the Avesta The earlier stages of the development of Zoroastrianism thus took place in pre-history. Early believers must have brought the faith from somewhere in Central Asia to the eastern parts of the Iranian lands, whence it gradually seems to have spread to the West along ancient trade routes.[48] The first literate civilization to adhere to Zoroastrianism was that of the Achaemenian empire,[49] whose centre was in western Iran and which, unlike the eastern Iranian areas, was directly exposed to the influence of the high cultures of Western Asia, notably Mesopotamia.

The fact that the Achaemenians were Zoroastrians must have done much to promote the status of the Zoroastrian priesthood, and may also have contributed to the notion that adherence to the 'Good Religion' brought divine blessing, which led to worldly success. This association between divine

approval and worldly success presumably made the later overthrow of the Zoroastrian dynasty by the unbeliever Alexander especially painful and traumatic for Zoroastrians.

It is thought that the local western Iranian priesthood, the Magi, adopted the Zoroastrian religion. Although they must have spoken western Iranian languages (Old Persian and Median), they evidently accepted Avestan, an eastern Iranian tongue, as a liturgical language. It seems likely that the first generations of Magi were trained by immigrant priests who were native speakers of Avestan. These early Zoroastrian Magi probably had an active command of the language, which enabled them to add to, or alter, existing texts to some extent. Later generations, however, seem largely to have contented themselves with a passive comprehension of Avestan. Initially that language must have been about as close to the native languages of the Magi as modern Spanish is to Italian, and they presumably understood much of what they recited.[50] As Old Persian developed further, however, the Avestan texts must have become increasingly difficult to follow. No way was evidently found to teach active knowledge of this ancient language and priests must have memorized the sacred texts parrot-fashion. Thus the Avestan texts, most of which had until then continued in free and presumably fluid transmission, became 'fixed' at least to the extent that no major additions could be made for want of an active command of the sacred tongue. It would still have been possible to add simple sentences or fixed formulae in which a new name was substituted for another.

Although Achaemenid culture was to some extent literate, the religious tradition continued to be transmitted orally.[51] Liturgical text must have been memorized by boys from priestly families from an early age.[52] A number of these went on to do higher religious studies, which, to judge by later practice, probably included exegesis[53] and other skills needed to interpret the religion. As comprehension of Avestan became so weak that measures were needed to prevent all loss of comprehension of the textual tradition, priests solved the problem by devising a system of word-for-word translation which – although grammatically and at times logically awkward – was simple enough to be memorized along with the Avestan original.[54] In the course of time this translation, known as *Zand*,[55] came to include explanatory comments by great teachers. Later, texts which were felt to be authoritative – and thus as having formed part of the divine revelation to Zarathustra – were also added to the *Zand*, even if no Avestan original was known to exist. In this way, knowledge of non-Iranian origin could be incorporated into the religious tradition. This must have given the religion the flexibility it needed to adapt to new circumstances, admitting as good Zoroastrian teaching views which originated in circumstances of which Zarathustra would have had no knowledge.

Alexander and the Seleucids The defeat of the Achaemenian empire by
Alexander the Great (known to the Iranians as 'Alexander the Accursed') in
or around 331 BCE, clearly had grave consequences for Zoroastrianism. Under
Alexander and his successors, the Seleucids, the faith lost both its political
influence and its cultural dominance. Outside influences – notably Hellenism,
which blended elements from different cultures into a new whole – clearly had
some influence on Zoroastrianism, as they affected the Zoroastrians' public
life. However, the structure of Zoroastrian religious life, with its hereditary
priesthood, its emphasis on ritual, its fixed Avestan liturgy and learned *Zand*
tradition, ensured that the effects of such influences were limited.

**The Parthians (third century BCE to 226 CE) and the Sasanians (226–
651)** With the rise of a new Iranian dynasty, the Parthians or Arsacids,
Zoroastrianism once more had an Iranian dynasty to protect it. There is no
reason to assume that the Parthians were bad Zoroastrians,[56] although they
were depicted as such by their successors, the Sasanians. Sasanian propaganda
stressed the religious orthodoxy of the new political establishment, and priest-
hood and Church were very influential during this period. Perhaps as a result
of challenges from Christianity and Manichaeism,[57] both of which claimed
that the purity of their tradition was safeguarded by the existence of written
sources, writing apparently came to be seen as a valuable tool for the preserva-
tion of the religion and in the course of the Sasanian era an alphabet was
devised which could adequately render the sounds of the Avestan language.
Those Avestan texts which were known in the Sasanian era were committed
to writing for the first time.[58]

The Islamic conquest of Iran (*c.* 650 CE) In the mid-seventh century CE,
the conquest of Iran by the armies of Islam put an end to the political and
cultural hegemony of the Zoroastrian 'Church' in that country. At first only
a limited number of Iranians appear to have been attracted to the new religion,
while a majority accepted the status of second-class citizens (*dhimmi*) and
continued in the faith of their forefathers. Gradually, however, Islamic culture
became dominant in Iran, and increasing numbers of Zoroastrians converted.
The remaining Zoroastrian communities consequently became steadily poorer
and more marginal, and it may have become clear around the ninth century
CE that they would not in future be able to support the extensive body of
scholar-priests needed to keep their oral tradition alive. A group of priests
then devoted itself to writing down (in Pahlavi, the language of Sasanian
Iran) those elements of the religious tradition that seemed to them most
relevant. The resulting works – i.e. most of the extant Pahlavi Books – were
thus committed to writing under pressure in the ninth and tenth centuries

after a lengthy oral transmission. They are the product of a cultural tradition that had not yet acquired the sophistication of a developed written tradition, and in many cases appear to have been written down exactly as they had been transmitted in oral form.

This means that the extant Zoroastrian textual tradition is by its very nature ahistorical: with the exception of the *Gathas* and a few Pahlavi Books written by known authors, it can be assumed that both the Avesta and the Pahlavi literature are the final versions of texts which evolved in oral transmission over long periods of time, often absorbing various and heterogeneous traditions.

Eschatological ideas in Zarathustra's teachings

The Zoroastrian tradition on the whole claims to be a unified one, based wholly on Ahura Mazda's revelation to Zarathustra; this implies that what is found in the Pahlavi Books was held to be representative of Zarathustra's time as well as much later periods. Although it is true that a degree of continuity can be shown to exist from the earliest period until well into the post-Sasanian era,[59] such claims are of course too sweeping. The following pages will be devoted to an examination of the sources with a view to ascertaining which elements of Middle Persian eschatological and millenary accounts can be attributed to Zarathustra and the early history of Zoroastrianism, and which entered the tradition later.

On the difficulties of interpreting the *Gathas* The *Gathas* of Zarathustra belong to an intricate tradition of mantic poetry of which we know almost nothing. Moreover, they are the products of a pre-historic culture at whose realities we can only guess. If the exact meaning and implications of many passages thus escape us, there can be no doubt that the opposition between the forces of good and evil, and the human beings belonging to either, plays a central role there, and that each person's choice in this matter will have grave consequences both for the individual and for the world.

Judgment of the soul after death That the individual soul will find recompense after death is suggested by Yasna [Y]31.20:

> He who may approach the truthful one, splendor will be his (reward), (as) contrasted with weeping, a long life in darkness, foul food, (and) the word 'woe': to that existence (your) religious view will lead you, O you deceitful one, on account of your own actions.[60]

The same seems to be implied by Y46.10, where Zarathustra says:

That man or woman, O Wise Ahura, who will grant me (those things) which Thou knowest (to be) the best of existence … with all those, I shall cross over the Bridge of the Separator.[61]

Zarathustra, in other words, will lead his flock at the time of the judgment of the soul, causing them to reach paradise, unlike the evil traditional priests and rulers, whose souls will recoil from them when they reach the bridge, to be 'for all time[62] guests in the house of deceit (i.e. hell)'[63] (Y46.11). This passage (Y46.10,11) could perhaps also be taken to mean that, at an early stage of his career, Zarathustra expected the world to become perfect during his lifetime and hoped to lead his followers to the Best Existence himself, while his opponents would be left to face the consequences of their wickedness. The image of a bridge to be crossed, however, seems to suggest the passage of souls to the hereafter rather than the 'making perfect' of this world. In later Zoroastrianism the image of the Bridge is certainly understood in this way.

The final battle and the End of Time   Besides a judgment of the individual soul,[64] the *Gathas* also refer to a final contest between the forces of good and evil. Fire and molten metal are repeatedly mentioned in such contexts. Y44.15 speaks of a time 'when the two armies which have nothing in common will come together.' Y51.9 refers to a battle in which fire and molten metal play a role:

The satisfaction which Thou shalt give to both factions through Thy pure fire and the molten iron, Wise One, is to be given as a sign among living beings, in order to destroy the deceitful and save the truthful.[65]

The *Gathas* emphatically mention recompense at this final point. In Y43.5 we find: 'Bad for the bad, a good reward for the good (each to be given) through Thy skill at the final turning point of creation.'[66] Similarly, Y30.8 says:

And thus, when the punishment for these sinners shall come to pass, then, for Thee, Wise One, shall the rule of good thinking be at hand, in order to be announced to those, Lord, who shall deliver deceit into the hands of truth.[67]

When this process is completed, the world will become *frasha* or 'perfect' (cf. *frasho-kereti*, on which see above).

The term *Saoshyant* in the *Gathas*   While one passage suggests that it is Ahura Mazda who plays the main role in achieving *frasho-kereti*,[68] elsewhere Zarathustra says (Y30.9): 'Therefore may we be the ones who shall make the world *frasha*.' This passage clearly suggests that Zarathustra's own actions and those of his contemporaries will have a direct bearing on the Last Things.

This appears to be confirmed by the Gathic use of the word *saoshyant*, which in the later tradition is used for the figure(s) who will save the world in a remote future. The word is a future participle of a root *sav*, which means, approximately, 'to bring advantage'.[69] Av. *saoshyant* is variously rendered by such terms as 'saviour' (Insler), 'benefactor' (Humbach), and 'celui promis à l'opulence' (Kellens and Pirart).

As Insler[70] has pointed out, the context of a key passage (Y46.3: 'The intentions of *those who shall save* are in accord with Thy mature teachings'), strongly suggest that Zarathustra's followers are collectively referred to as *saoshyant*s. This seems to be confirmed by Y48.12:

> Yes, those men shall be the saviors of the lands, namely, those who shall follow their knowledge of Thy teaching with actions in harmony with good thinking and with truth, Wise One. These indeed have been fated to be the expellers of fury.[71]

A little earlier in the text (Y46.9), Zarathustra uses the word *saoshyant* in a context where it almost certainly refers to himself:

> When shall I know, Wise One, if ye have mastery through truth over anyone whose threat is inimical to me? Let the solemn words of good thinking be truly told to me. (For) he who shall save (*saoshyans*) shall know how his reward shall be.

Zarathustra seems to plead here with Ahura Mazda to demonstrate his power to protect the righteous, claiming his, Zarathustra's, right to know because he is one who 'shall save'.[72]

The question then arises in what sense the future tense of the participle *saoshyant* is to be interpreted.[73] Unless one assumes that Zarathustra and his community initially expected to bring 'salvation' during their lifetime and realized later that this was not to be,[74] one might understand the Gathic term as meaning 'one who[se actions] will have the effect of bringing salvation in the future', which could obviously refer to Zarathustra, but also to those who collaborated with him towards the desired end.

The Evidence of the Young Avesta

The development of the concepts of the Saviour and the Resurrection of the dead   Thus the concepts of heaven and hell, a judgment of the soul, and a final battle between the cosmic forces are attested in the *Gathas*. That final struggle, which may imply an end to time as we know it, involves fire and molten metal and will cause the world to become 'perfect'.[75] There is no clear reference there, however, to a physical resurrection of the dead, nor

does the word *saoshyant* appear to have the meaning it was to acquire later. Both concepts are found together, however, in Yasht [Yt]19, which contains references to many of the features of Zoroastrian eschatology as described in the later tradition.

In Yt19.89, the Saviour is called 'the living indestructible one', i.e. one to whom Ahrimanic evil cannot attain. In Yt19 this figure is also referred to as 'the victorious one among the Saoshyants', suggesting a semantic development whereby the once unspecific term *saoshyant*[76] gradually became closely associated with the concept of a single savior-figure, around whom legends developed. The relevant passages run as follows:[77]

10: Ahura Mazda created many and good creatures … (11) in order that they shall make the world perfect … in order that the dead shall rise up, that the Living One, the Indestructible, shall come, the world be made perfect at his wish …

89: … the Victorious One among the Saoshyants[78] and also his other companions, so that he may make the world perfect, unchanging, undying, uncorrupted, undecaying, ever-living, ever-growing …

92–3: When Astvat-ereta[79] comes out from Lake Kansaoya, the messenger of Ahura Mazda, son of Vispa-taurvairi[80] … then he will there drive Evil out from the world of Righteousness.[81]

94: He will gaze with the eyes of wisdom, he will behold all creation of … [82] He will gaze with the eyes of sacrifice[83] on the whole material world and, watching, will make it indestructible.

95: His, victorious Astvat-ereta's, companions advance, thinking well, speaking well, acting well, of good religion; and indeed not speaking a false word with their tongues. Before them will flee the ill-fated (demon) Aeshma, with the bloody club. Righteousness will conquer the wicked (demon of) Evil, hideous, dark.

96: (The demon) Evil Thought will be overcome, (the Amesha Spenta) Good Thought will overcome him … Ahriman, of evil works will flee, bereft of power.

In view of the way oral texts generally develop, the fact that the passages in question occur at the beginning and at the end of the main section of this hymn[84] suggests that they are later in origin than other parts of the text. The complexity of the text shows, however, that they originated at a time when it was still possible to compose freely in Avestan. This is confirmed by another text, Yt13.129, which refers to Astvat-ereta,[85] explaining his name and describing the effects of his appearance in some detail:[86]

… who will be the Saoshyant, 'Victorious' by name, Astvat-ereta by name. (He

is called) Saoshyant because he will further[87] all material life; (he is called) Astvat-ereta because he will bring about material[88] safety (among) those who possess bodies (and) also life …

The Last Things as portrayed by the Young Avesta   While, as was shown earlier, Zarathustra's own *Gathas* refer to an End of Time, preceded by a final battle between the forces of evil and a cleansing by fire and molten metal, the so-called Young Avesta – consisting of texts which were transmitted relatively freely in the living language and could thus develop, perhaps until some time in the Achaemenian period – already shows many of the chief elements of the myth as we find it in the Pahlavi Books: there is the fully developed concept of a Saviour, whose appearance will lead to the Resurrection of the dead, whose activities have some connection with ritual sacrifice (cf. Yt19.94, 'gazing with the eyes of sacrifice'), and who will induce a final battle between the forces of good and evil, thus playing a crucial role in the process of making the world 'perfect'.

The Last Things and the First: 'mirroring'   It is interesting to note that in Zoroastrian eschatology as it developed since the time of the Prophet, the Last Things have come to mirror the First almost completely, although in a compressed form.[89] According to the Pahlavi books, the sequence of the Cosmogony and early history of mankind is as follows (see also above):

1. Creation (in stages)
2. Ritual acts: Ohrmazd pronounces the holiest prayer, and later performs a sacrifice (*yasna*)
3. Ahriman enters the world and actualizes conflict
4. Fire brings movement
5. Death and sin come into the world
6. Zarathustra appears.

At the End of Time, the sequence is reversed:

6. The Saoshyant appears, representing Zarathustra
5. Death is vanquished by the Resurrection; the Final Judgment neutralizes sin
4. Fire and molten metal cleanse the world, doing away with the need for further dynamism
3. The final battle takes place between Good and Evil
2. Ritual acts (*yasna)* are performed, first by the Saoshyant and then by Orhmazd
1. The Renovation mirrors Creation.

Of these elements of the eschatology, only the cleansing flow of molten metal has no obvious counterpart in the cosmogony. As it plays an important role in the *Gathas*, it seems likely that its presence in Zoroastrian eschatology goes back directly to Zarathustra's teaching.

The reappearance of early figures That the First Things were expected to mirror the Last is confirmed by a number of passages showing that prominent figures of Zarathustra's time were expected to return, or to be reborn, at the end of time.

An Avestan passage (Yt13.127) connects the name of Astvat-ereta, here called 'the latter-born' (*apara-zata*), with 'the latter-born Jamaspa' and 'the latter-born Maidyomangha'. Jamaspa and Maidyomangha are well-known contemporaries of Zarathustra,[90] who were evidently expected to appear again together with the Saoshyant.

In the *Greater Bundahishn* (GBd36.10), one of Zarathustra's 'naturally born' sons, Isat-vastra,[91] is said to play a role at the time of the Final Judgment, where one would logically expect Astvat-ereta to officiate. This indicates that the two figures were closely linked in the minds of some Zoroastrians.

Thirdly, there are the repeated references to the role of Peshotan, the son of Zarathustra's patron Vishtaspa, in accounts of the future course of world history (see above).[92]

Millenary and Cyclical Schemes

General The above account, however, covers only part of the course of world history as it is described in the Pahlavi Books. As Boyce puts it: 'The linear clarity of this ancient Zoroastrian apocalyptic, making known the course of events from the prophet's revelation to its fulfillment through his son, the Saoshyant, became blurred after scholar priests in western Iran had adopted a millennial scheme.'[93]

As we saw earlier, the Pahlavi tradition divides the course of world history, past and future, into clear-cut periods of 3,000 and 1,000 years respectively, mentioning either three or four periods of 3,000 years[94] and subdividing the last into three periods of 1,000 years. These last millennia will progress in similar ways, and can thus be seen as repetitive cycles of history: beginning positively but with a recrudescence of evil towards the end. The first of these ages begins when Zarathustra receives his revelation, the following two will see the appearance of his miraculously-born sons, Ushedar (Av. Ukhshyat-ereta) and Ushedarmah (Av. Ukhshyat-nemah). After the last millennium, Astvat-ereta will appear and achieve the Renovation in fifty-seven years;

accounts of his activities are thus not determined by millenarian speculations. The names of Ukhshyat-ereta and Ukhshyat-nemah occur in the Avesta only once (Yt13.128), in a passage whose structure is simple enough to have allowed interpolation at a time when priests had lost most of their active command of Avestan.

Time speculations and the question of Zurvanism As far as one can judge, these novel elements enter the tradition in the context of a broader preoccupation with time, astronomy, astral fatalism and further speculations about fate and predestination. This development has been plausibly explained as a result of the influence of Babylonian culture, in which the study of astronomy – and thus presumably notions concerning the function of time – played an important role.[95]

Because they occur in what appears to be a novel context, Zoroastrian millenarian ideas have widely been associated with Zurvanism, a creed or tradition which held that Zurvan, the God of Time, was more powerful than either Ohrmazd or Ahriman. These were in fact regarded as his twin sons,[96] to whom Zurvan had left dominion of the world. Definite periods of time (multiples of 1,000 years) are frequently mentioned in connection with such beliefs (see below), although they also occur in other contexts.

As far as one can judge, Zarathustra's message implies that the advent of the Renovation depends in part on the efforts and moral choice of each individual believer. This must logically mean that the time of these events cannot be predestined (although Ohrmazd's role as creator indicates that the world will eventually come to obey him only). On the other hand, time-speculations of the kind we find in the later tradition necessarily imply that the future course of world history is preordained; many Pahlavi texts in fact reflect a belief in fate and predetermination. This and other discrepancies[97] led many scholars to think of a dichotomy between Zoroastrian 'orthodoxy' and Zurvanism, which was seen as a heresy based on a fully developed doctrinal system, and which was distinct from 'orthodoxy' in all but ritual expression. Millennialism was therefore held to have been 'Zurvanite in origin [and] later somewhat awkwardly adapted to orthodox Zoroastrianism'.[98]

The notion of a Zurvanite 'heresy', however, has in recent years been challenged with what appear to be plausible arguments, leading to the conclusion that 'what we have referred to as Zurvanism was never a sect or school of thought; but it was merely a fairly inoffensive variant of the Zoroastrian myth of creation, one of several'.[99] If this is right, or if Zurvanism was at least less radically separate from other forms of Zoroastrianism than was hitherto assumed, millennialism is to be regarded, not as an aberration but as an integral part of later Zoroastrian teaching.

On the implications of orality Both the status of Zurvanism and the existence of fairly widely diverging accounts of the millennial scheme in the sources can be better understood in the light of the realities of the tradition. As we saw earlier, for a long time Zoroastrian teachings were transmitted orally, first in priestly schools or traditions, and then in turn by learned priests to those who followed them. The available evidence suggests that, in both cases, questions and answers formed part of religious instruction, which means that questions reflecting current realities played a role in determining the content of future teaching. The absence of written sources would have made it difficult to delineate the precise boundaries of orthodox teaching when novel questions or points of view – such as those about a preordained time-frame for future events – arose. Furthermore, the lack of such a restrictive definition of acceptable belief may have made it almost impossible for many learned priests to respond to new questions simply by affirming that Zoroastrianism had no answers to offer.

Interaction between different theological views in oral traditions tends to be very limited,[100] moreover, and in the case of Zoroastrianism it can be demonstrated that a plurality of acceptable views existed where grave disputes might have arisen in a strongly literate environment. Since Zarathustra's original teaching that time will have an end probably formed a plausible basis for further-reaching speculations, it seems likely that millenary schemes came to exist side by side with ideas based on more ancient Zoroastrian teaching without being perceived as contradicting these.

Early references to millenary ideas The existence of a millenarian scheme in the Zoroastrian tradition is first attested by Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* 47:

> Theopompus says that, according to the Magians, for three thousand years alternately the one god will dominate the other and be dominated, and that for another three thousand years they will fight and make war, until one smashes up the domain of the other. In the end Hades [i.e. the Evil spirit] shall perish and men shall be happy; neither shall they need sustenance nor shall they cast a shadow.[101]

Plutarch (*c*. 45–*c*.125 CE) bases his account on the evidence of Theopompus, who was born in 376 BCE.[102] This suggests that the essential elements[103] of a millenary scheme had become part of the tradition by the late Achaemenian period.

The later accounts of the Armenian Eznik of Kolb and the Syrian Theodore bar Konay,[104] which may derive from the same mid-Sasanian source,[105] describe how Zurvan offered sacrifice for 1,000 years in order to have a son. A moment

of doubt caused Ahriman to be conceived, whereas the virtue of the sacrifice itself led to the conception of Ohrmazd. When Zurvan became aware of the conception of twins, he promised to grant the dominion of the world to his first-born son. Ahriman was told of this by his omniscient twin, Ohrmazd, and pierced the womb in order to be first. Zurvan protested but had to abide by his oath, saying:

> O false and injurious one! The kingship shall be granted to you for 9000 years; and (then) I shall establish Ohrmazd as ruler over you. And after 9000 years Ohrmazd shall reign and do all that he will wish to do. Then Ohrmazd and Ahriman set to fashioning the creatures.[106]

While Plutarch thus describes an alternation of the fortunes of both powers, the two sources reflecting Sasanian beliefs depict the period of creation as belonging entirely to Ahriman. No mention is made of an age belonging to Zarathustra or to his sons – which suggests that these cyclical traditions developed in another milieu or at a later stage – but all sources agree in mentioning a period of 9,000 years.[107]

Zarathustra's three sons, and cycles of history The few early sources at our disposal thus suggest that the numbers 3 and 1,000 played a particularly significant role in shaping Zoroastrian millenary accounts. This in itself may help to explain the development of a scheme in which the original Saoshyant is represented as the last of three saviour-figures. The Zoroastrian tradition, moreover, states that Zarathustra had three 'naturally-born' sons (Isat-vastra, Urvatat-nara and Hvare-cithra).[108] Given the belief in the reappearance of early prominent figures, it would not be far-fetched to assume that the notion of three 'saviour-figures' was also partly inspired by a cultural memory of his 'real' sons. Since Zarathustra's era, within which the three saviour-figures must logically appear, was thought to last for 3,000 years, the resulting tripartition of that age may well have presented itself as an obvious part of such millenarian speculations.

If that is so – i.e. if the notion of the three millennia of the last age originally was no more than a felicitous idea that had no basis in the earlier tradition – neither legends nor stories about the last two millennia or the first two saviour-figures could have existed. When the scheme eventually came to form part of the accepted tradition, the 'hollow millennia' may simply have been portrayed as echoes of the first one, which had begun with the blessed appearance of the prophet but had later deteriorated.

The cycles and their implications for the Zoroastrian worldview There appears to be no need, therefore, to look for an alien origin of the notion of

cyclical history in Zoroastrianism. However, the emergence of such a concept did imply that the perceived deterioration of world conditions since Zarathustra's ideal time had to be doctrinally explained in a novel way. While the Zoroastrian view of world history may originally have been largely 'linear' – with a steady progress towards the ideal state of the Renovation, interrupted at unpredictable intervals by the machinations of Ahriman – the belief in a succession of saviour-figures could only mean that a series of calamities would precede the advent of each as a preordained course of events.

Apocalyptic Ideas

The development of an Iranian apocalypse   Whether it originated with the above developments or was merely strengthened by them, the view that communal suffering was part of a predestined scheme of things presumably helped Zoroastrians come to terms with such major adversities as the Macedonian and Arab conquests. At times of national calamities, tales of this type were probably often told at all levels of society, offering explanation, comfort and hope. Thus, it seems, a recognizable apocalyptic genre developed, purporting to recount prophecies foretelling the disasters that had in fact already befallen the Iranians, but also telling of decisive changes of fortune which were destined to restore the community to its previous glory in due course.

That the Iranian civilization was known for its apocalyptic tradition in late antiquity is suggested by the title and contents of a Graeco-Roman work which is no longer extant, the 'Oracles of Hystaspes' (Hystaspes being the Greek version of the name of Zarathustra's patron, Vishtaspa), citations from which suggest that it contained some genuine Zoroastrian material.[109]

On the historical evaluation of apocalyptic sources   'Apocalyptic' tales probably continued to be told in some milieus – as part of the priestly tradition, but possibly also as entertaining popular stories – long after the original traumas had healed. It seems likely that, in the priestly tradition at least, a standard account of such tales eventually emerged which was best calculated to fit in with the tradition as a whole.[110] At times of new catastrophes such accepted, 'structured' versions probably generated a variety of popular tales.

It has been been noted that traditions which evolve in the course of long oral transmission tend to develop in such a way that they contain references to the time of a group's origins and again to events which affected the last few generations, but mention nothing in between.[111] In other words, in an account which originated in the Hellenistic period and continued to be told until it was finally written down in the ninth century CE, the descriptions of most of the

protagonists and events may reflect what seemed significant in the latter period, and show few traces of the reality of the fourth or third century BCE.

It is not possible, therefore, to scrutinize and evaluate written versions of this type by means of philological and critical methods designed to deal with written traditions. In the case of Zoroastrianism, an additional problem is posed by the nature of the *Zand* (on which see above). About three-quarters of the Avesta as it existed in Sasanian times are now lost,[112] and it is widely assumed that some Pahlavi texts are based on the *Zand* of genuine Avestan texts which are no longer extant. On the other hand, the *Zand* system clearly allowed the priesthood to incorporate new or foreign material into the Zoroastrian tradition.

The 'metallic ages' and the *Zand-i Wahman Yasn* In the scholarly discussion of the past decades, the question of the origins of Iranian apocalyptic ideas is closely connected with the status of the myth of the metallic ages (see above), since the myth is most elaborately described in the *Zand-i Wahman Yasn*, and has been taken to provide a framework there for various accounts of an 'apocalyptic' nature. The details of the academic discussion, which is only tangentially relevant to the subject under discussion, are too intricate to be examined in the present context. It may suffice, therefore, to allude to some of the main assumptions made there and to offer some considerations.

1. Most authors view the ZWY essentially as one text – either as an ancient composition consisting of the *Zand* of a lost *Yasht* to the Amesha Spenta Vohu Manah (Phl. Wahman), or as a very late one reflecting the miseries of the Zoroastrian community in post-Sasanian times. The chief proponent of the latter view, Ph. Gignoux, strongly argues that no Avestan *Yasht* to Vohu Manah (Phl. *Wahman Yasht* or *Yasn*), and consequently no *Zand* to such a text, can have existed.

2. Hultgård (1991), who advances arguments in favour of the existence of an Avestan original of the *Wahman Yasht*, somewhat hesitantly seems to suggest that the myth of the metallic ages formed part of this ancient hymn. Gignoux[113] argues that the story derives from the Biblical Daniel 2: 37–40.[114] Boyce, who assumes that an Avestan *Wahman Yasht* existed and that the core of the ZWY is based on its *Zand*, nevertheless regards the concept of the metallic ages as a borrowing from Greek culture which entered the Zoroastrian tradition in the period following the Macedonian conquest of Iran.

Boyce's views imply that at least one major element of the ZWY did not belong to the Avestan tradition. Hultgård[115] admits the same thing for other parts of that text. This in itself suggests that, instead of approaching it as though it were essentially an organic whole, it may be preferable to regard the

text as a late compilation, a book written to bring together various apocalyptic traditions at a time when the priesthood was concerned to preserve the essential parts of the faith in written form. (Such a procedure would naturally have forced the compilers to impose some sort of logical order on this material, giving it a superficial semblance of coherence.) If the extant ZWY cannot be shown to be based on a single Avestan text but is more likely to be a composite work, then it cannot be assumed that all its contents must go back to an ancient Iranian tradition, and consequently it cannot be used as evidence of an ancient Iranian origin of the myth of the 'metallic ages'.

As we saw earlier, the character of most Pahlavi texts is essentially ahistorical. Given that no Avestan origin can be proved, views on the time of the emergence of the 'metallic ages' in the Zoroastrian tradition can therefore be based only on considerations of plausibility. Since no known passage of the Avesta suggests that the appearance of Zarathustra marked the beginning of a steady decline – a notion that would be wholly contrary to the spirit of the *Gathas* – an ancient Zoroastrian origin can probably be excluded.[116] There would therefore appear to be two possible scenarios:

1. Some time after the time of the composition of Daniel 2 in the second century BCE,[117] but most probably after the Islamic conquest, Zoroastrians were sufficiently impressed with a late Jewish text to incorporate it into their tradition, and this was done so successfully that the text soon came to be seen as part of Zarathustra's revelation.

2. During the period following the overthrow of the Achaemenian empire by Alexander 'the Accursed', the mood of the Zoroastrian community was one of gloom. As the evidence of Theopompus (*apud* Plutarch, see above) suggests, the notion that the fortunes of the ages are predetermined had already gained at least some acceptance. At this period, when Hellenism was becoming a dominant cultural influence in Iran, the Greek myth of the metallic ages was introduced there and its implied pessimism aptly reflected the mood of the Zoroastrian faithful, who accepted it as part of religious truth.

Clearly, the latter account would seem more plausible.

Conclusion

Mary Boyce[118] defines 'revolutionary millenarianism' as 'a type of salvation-belief which has arisen characteristically "against a background of disaster", when rapidly changing social conditions have caused suffering and disorientation for a minority, and have brought forth a prophet who assures them of the compensation and triumphant happiness in a time to come'. She calls Zarathustra 'not only the fountain-head of Iranian apocalyptic,[119] but also the

first known millenarian in the wider sense of that term'. Moreover, she maintains that 'Zoroastrianism is in fact the archetypal millenarian faith, to which most subsequent millenarian movements may well owe a historical debt'. Whether some of these contentions are accepted as true clearly depends on one's definition of the concepts in question. However, without Zara-thustra's original teaching that the world will have an end – preceded by a final battle and a moral reckoning, a retribution which will banish evil for ever – the notion of a preordained and 'moral' future of the universe would be unthinkable. Such beliefs of course lie at the heart of both millenarian and apocalyptic ideas.

Further speculation on the Last Things, which were apparently thought of as 'mirroring' the events of Creation and the time of Zarathustra, led to the development of the concepts of a world-saviour, Zarathustra's son born of a virgin mother, and of a physical resurrection of the dead; again, potent images in the history of millenarian ideas that was to follow.

When the concept of time came to be seen as being of crucial importance – partly no doubt under foreign influence – the originally vague notion that Good would eventually vanquish Evil in a world which essentially belongs to Ohrmazd became more defined and led to truly 'millenarian' speculations: a predestined, 'moral' future for the world, conceived in terms of periods and ages of 1,000 and 3,000 years.

Later, when the Macedonian and Arab conquests confronted the com-munity with catastrophe, a legend of alien origin, that of the metallic ages, apparently helped the Zoroastrians deal with the trauma. As this legend depicted the future of the world in familiar terms of 'ages', it was accepted as part of Zoroastrian teaching and probably facilitated the development of a rich apocalyptic tradition.

As usually happens with oral traditions, pre-Islamic Zoroastrianism shaped these apocalyptic and millenary accounts until they had reached the form most relevant and satisfying to the community. After the advent of Islam, the second major catastrophe in the history of the religion, these accounts came to play an important role. In this way a tradition which for the most part had its origin in the remote past of the Iranian people, but some of whose elements came from outside Iran, eventually received the final redaction which has so impressed many scholars in the field of apocalyptic and millenarian studies.

3

The Biblical Roots of Apocalyptic

Robert R. Wilson

For centuries in the West, the Bible has provided a paradigm for the identification and analysis of contemporary apocalyptic movements. Even when such movements do not explicitly invoke biblical passages or images, analysts nevertheless usually consider a movement to be apocalyptic to the degree that it conforms to the biblical models. Given the primary role that the Bible has played in the history of western apocalypticism, then, it is important to try to understand the biblical phenomenon and the way in which it developed in the biblical world. However, such an effort at understanding is difficult in two respects. First, we in fact know very little about biblical apocalypticism except through the biblical text itself, and even there apocalyptic literature is not well represented. Biblical scholars commonly identify only Daniel 7–12 and the Book of Revelation as clear examples of apocalyptic literature, although isolated passages such as Mark 13 are occasionally added to the list. In addition, passages such as Isaiah 24–7, Ezekiel 38–9, Joel, Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi are sometimes thought to be 'proto-apocalyptic', although they do not exhibit the structure of the classical extra-biblical apocalypses.

Second, biblical apocalypticism is difficult to understand because the Jewish and Christian communities that have viewed the Bible as sacred scripture have often ignored the apocalyptic dimensions of the text and at times even tried to suppress it. This is undoubtedly true in the case of the classical rabbis of the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods, who had little use for apocalyptic or mystical forms of Judaism. Even Christianity, which certainly began as an apocalyptic movement, shed most of its apocalyptic features at about the same time that it became an acceptable religion within the Roman empire. Although apocalyptic groups have arisen fairly regularly during the course of Christian history, most major Christian traditions have tended to suppress apocalypticism.

On both the Jewish and Christian sides the neglect or suppression of

apocalyptic by communities of faith is difficult to explain with any precision, but it may be related to the tendency for apocalyptic groups to rely on direct revelation rather than on revelation mediated through ecclesiastical teachers and officials or through officially interpreted texts. Revelation of this sort can easily be perceived by religious leaders as a threat if it appears to challenge the stability of established religious communities. As a result, the communities themselves often officially reject apocalyptic phenomena, although individual members may remain strongly attracted to them.

The tendency to reject or ignore apocalypticism has been exhibited in scholarly circles as well, although in this case the motives for at least some of the neglect can easily be seen. During the last part of the nineteenth century, when scholars in the universities began to write accounts of the early history of Judaism and Christianity, there was a strong tendency to see ancient Israel's religion as an evolution from 'primitive' nature worship through polytheism to the ethically-oriented monotheism of the biblical prophets. Seen against the background of this sort of developmental schema, apocalyptic religion appeared to many scholars to be a regression to earlier, less exalted religious forms. Apocalypticism was therefore thought not to be typically Christian or Jewish, and its origins were often sought outside the Jewish and Christian communities. Only a theory of borrowing could account for a religious perspective that seemed so out of touch with scholarly reconstructions of 'pure' Jewish or Christian faith. As a result of this scholarly perspective, until fairly recently Jewish scholars simply ignored the study of mystical or messianic Judaism, while the great Christian biblical scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found apocalyptic literature to be something of an embarrassment. Only with the discovery of the literature of a Jewish apocalyptic community at Qumran on the Dead Sea has scholarly interest in apocalypticism been revived.[1]

Although in recent years significant work on apocalypticism has been published by Paul Hanson, John J. Collins and Stephen Cook, among others, much work remains to be done, and in a sense the study of biblical apocalypticism remains in its infancy.[2] In the discussion that follows I will indicate what the main lines of research have been and where scholarly disagreements still remain.

The Problem of Terminology

As John J. Collins and others have noted, scholars have not always been clear in their use of language when discussing biblical apocalypticism. This is particularly true in the case of the word 'apocalyptic' itself, which functions in the scholarly literature both as an adjective and as a noun. While the

word's use as a noun retains a certain vague quality which is sometimes useful, in the interest of clarity I will follow Collins's suggestion that 'apocalyptic' be used only as an adjective.[3] Accordingly I will distinguish three aspects of biblical apocalypticism: apocalyptic religion, apocalyptic literature and apocalyptic eschatology. These three aspects overlap to a certain extent and are interrelated, but for the purpose of analysis it will be helpful to discuss them separately.

Apocalyptic Religion

Apocalyptic religion involves a particular cluster of beliefs about the nature of reality and the behaviours that are based on those beliefs. Some aspects of the apocalyptic worldview were widely held in the biblical world, while others seem to have been confined to particular apocalyptic groups. Although there is a good bit of variety in the beliefs attested in the biblical texts, there are nevertheless some constants that are present in all examples of apocalyptic religion.

1. Practitioners of apocalyptic religion believe that reality extends beyond the visible world to include a supernatural world of some sort populated by powers that have a direct impact on life in this world. In the traditional biblical perspective God is the chief power in the supernatural world, although late texts also know of other powers, including a variety of angelic messengers and evil forces. These supernatural powers influence human affairs either by intervening directly in them or by acting out in heaven events that are somehow mirrored on the earth (Daniel 10:10–14, for example).

2. Practitioners of apocalyptic religion think of themselves as a group that has been specially selected by God to play a key role in the running of the world. Apocalyptic religion is therefore not in the first instance a matter of individual belief but a group phenomenon which requires the social support of the group in order to flourish. In the biblical texts apocalyptic writers refer to their groups in various ways, but their special status is always evident. They are the 'true' Israel (or as the Apostle Paul would put it, 'the Israel of God'), the servants of God, the 'wise', the 'saints of the most high', the true priests, those written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem. In any case they are set apart from the rest of their society by virtue of what they know and ultimately what they are to do.

3. Members of apocalyptic religious groups experience a sharp disjuncture between the role they feel they are to play in the cosmos and daily life as they actually experience it. Their view of their self-identity is at odds with their actual lives in the world. This experience of disjuncture is sometimes explained by anthropologists through the use of relative deprivation theory,

which, in spite of some of its difficulties, has been used increasingly by biblical scholars to analyse their material.[4]

According to relative deprivation theory, apocalyptic religious groups are made up of people who are on the periphery of society. They lack political, religious and social power and have little social status. Furthermore, they *know* that they are on the periphery. They feel repressed and deprived of something which they might reasonably expect to possess. The feelings of deprivation that these people experience may come from various sources. Peripheral individuals may lack food, clothing, useful work, or adequate housing. They may be politically powerless or socially ostracized, feeling that they no longer have a voice in the way in which the society is run. They may even believe that they can no longer control their own lives and destinies. On the other hand, they may simply have the vague feeling that the quality of their lives is poorer than it was in a real or imagined past. The sort of deprivation involved in apocalyptic groups is rarely absolute but is usually measured in relation to something else. People may measure their present situation against the situation of others in the same culture or in neighbouring cultures, or they may measure their present situation against their own past situation.

Although it is normal for some feelings of deprivation to exist in every society, certain conditions tend to intensify those feelings and to create larger numbers of dissatisfied and deprived individuals. Such conditions are present particularly in times of rapid social change. Wars, famines, climatic changes, national economic reversals, and the shock of sudden cross-cultural contact can all lead to unusually widespread and severe feelings of deprivation. Not only do such periods of social upheaval produce political and social inequities that lead to genuine cases of deprivation, but crises such as wars and clashes with other cultures provide opportunities for people to compare their own situation with that of outsiders. These comparisons may lead to feelings of relative deprivation and fuel social unrest. Times of social crisis frequently give rise to apocalyptic groups, for in such times feelings of deprivation are increased beyond tolerable levels.

The use of relative deprivation theory at first glance seems to be a helpful way to understand the feelings of disjuncture expressed by the Bible's apocalyptic groups. Since the Bible's apocalyptic texts come primarily from times of major social upheaval if not actual persecution, it would be relatively simple to understand how the trauma of the Israelite exile could have engendered feelings of political powerlessness that would have led to the visions of Daniel or how the Roman persecution of early Christians could have led them to take refuge in a faith based on a hope for the supernatural bloody defeat of Rome envisioned in the Book of Revelation. Furthermore, relative

deprivation theory would fit well with work such as that of Paul Hanson, who traces the rise of Old Testament apocalyptic to the conflicts between prophetic and priestly groups that arose in the religious reversals of the post–exilic period.[5]

There are, however, some major problems both with the theory itself and with its application to the biblical material.[6] While these problems should not completely discourage the theory's use, they should urge caution in its application. First, the theory at most offers a way of understanding the social setting of individuals who participate in apocalyptic groups. It cannot predict which conditions of deprivation will lead to the formation of successful groups and which will not. Nor can the theory explain why social deprivation sometimes does not lead to the formation of an apocalyptic community at all. Second, it is not always easy to demonstrate that all members of apocalyptic groups are in fact deprived, although the term 'relative' in the phrase 'relative deprivation theory' does provide the somewhat circular grounds for the interpreter to insist that these individuals must be deprived whether they recognize it or not. In fact, in some apocalyptic groups deprivation is far from being obvious. To point to some biblical cases, recent research on early Christian groups in the second century suggests that some members were fairly well off socially and economically, thus suggesting that Christianity was not wholly a religion of the dispossessed, as some scholars have suggested.[7] Similarly, it is worth noting that the biblical apocalypses were undoubtedly the productions of literate elites, even though all of the users of this material may not have been in the same category. Finally, there are hints in the texts that the conflicts engendering them may have been conflicts between relative equals. Thus a book like Malachi might reflect conflicts within the priesthood rather than a conflict between priest and prophet, although as with all biblical texts any reconstruction of the text's background is difficult and uncertain. This remark naturally leads to a third problem with applying relative deprivation theory to the biblical texts. Any attempt to analyse the conditions which produced the texts must necessarily involve a good bit of pure guesswork. Although this fact should not discourage the attempt, the tentative nature of the project from the outset needs to be recognized.

4. A fourth feature of apocalyptic religion is that it provides a way of resolving the disjuncture experienced by the group and reinforcing its belief that it does indeed occupy a special position in the cosmos, even though daily experience may suggest the contrary. In practical terms this means that the group believes that the world it experiences is not the real world or that there will soon be a reversal of the group's fortunes, either in this world or in some supra-historical world to come. This belief is usually expressed in the form of some sort of programme designed to explain how the great reversal is to

take place. It is a peculiar feature of such apocalyptic programmes that they cannot be discovered through simple observation of the world or through the exercise of the intellect. Rather the programme becomes clear only when it is revealed, either by a human catalyst, who becomes the leader of the group, or by some sort of heavenly revealer or intermediary (whose revelation is often mediated through the human catalyst). This revealed knowledge of the programme and how it is to be interpreted is available only to members of the group, and this knowledge separates them from the rest of their society and affirms their special status. In the biblical texts these programmes and their interpretations vary a good bit in their details, and they require various degrees of involvement by the members of the group. At one extreme would be programmes that require the concerted activities of group members for the reversal of fortunes to take place, while at the other end of the spectrum would be visions of massive divine intervention without human help. Most biblical examples illustrate some combination of the two. The great reversal will take place as a result of God's direct activity, but the faithful are still required to do something in the meantime. The notion that some action is required on the part of the group seems to be important in maintaining group cohesion, for it allows the group to do something constructive while awaiting the end, which is often notoriously slow in coming.

Apocalyptic Literature

In a general sense, apocalyptic literature is simply literature produced by a person or group holding apocalyptic religious views. As such, it is highly variable and can be expected to reflect the normal language and perspectives of the people who produced it. Thus, for example, an apocalyptic group composed primarily of prophets would produce literature which reflects some form of the prophetic tradition, while Persian bureaucrats of the sort described in the early chapters of Daniel would use the language of the Persian royal court.

Beyond this general observation, however, there is in early Jewish and Christian literature a specific literary genre known as an apocalypse, although the form of the genre shows a good bit of variability.[8] It is in the apocalypses that many of the literary features often associated with apocalypticism are to be found, although it is worth noting that not all features are found in all examples of the genre, and some features are found in other literary genres as well. Included among these features are descriptions of the means by which the particular revelation came, sometimes with accounts of heavenly guides or interpreters or of supernatural travels; a description of the human recipient of the revelation, often a well known figure from the distant past;

accounts of past events and prophecies of things to come. These accounts are sometimes clear and precise (although often short on details), but sometimes specific descriptions are mixed with narratives made up of graphic but obscure symbolism requiring further interpretation from earthly or heavenly interpreters. Examples of the latter would include the use of animal imagery, numerology, and cosmogonic language and motifs drawn from the ancient Near East's vast store of mythological materials. These features tend to cluster in various combinations in apocalypses and help to give them their distinctive character. Finally, apocalypses often include instructions concerning what the recipient is to do with the revelation and how believers are to act while awaiting the promised end of the current age.

Apocalyptic Eschatology

The word 'eschatology' is usually used by theologians and biblical scholars to refer to the themes and motifs associated with Jewish and Christian beliefs about the end of the temporal world and the beginning of a new world to come. Although non-specialists sometimes equate eschatology with apocalypticism, in fact the two are not identical. In the interests of clarity, therefore, it is best to follow Paul Hanson's suggestion to use the more specific phrase 'apocalyptic eschatology' to refer to the themes and motifs associated with the end of the world in apocalyptic literature.[9] Having made this useful clarification, however, it is important to recognize that the Bible's apocalyptic texts actually have very little to say on this subject, and it is certainly the case that there is no unified biblical view of the world's final moments. To be sure, the biblical apocalypses do mention traditional eschatological motifs, such as the resurrection of the dead, the coming of the messianic king, the final judgment, the punishment of the wicked, the defeat of the evil powers, the messianic banquet, and the reward of the righteous, but these motifs appear in non-apocalyptic biblical literature as well. They are woven together into a comprehensive scenario only in post-biblical Jewish and Christian thinking. Without referring to specific details, it is sometimes asserted that even though the Bible's apocalyptic groups did not share a common eschatology they at least believed that history would end and that the hoped-for transformation of reality would take place only in a new non-historical world to come.[10] This assertion can also be debated, although the debate is difficult to resolve because of the ambiguity of the evidence. Certainly when the Book of Revelation describes the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven, the biblical writer seems to envision something that transcends the historical city (Revelation 21: 1–22, 7). On the other hand, the goals of some apocalyptic groups seem quite bound to this world, and their members seem to be intent on exercising

very temporal power in a world quite like the existing world. Furthermore, Jewish and Christian interpreters throughout the ages have read the biblical apocalypses as referring to events in the interpreters' own historical time and have often identified themselves as the 'saints' who would soon rule over a very temporal kingdom (Daniel 7: 27). Such interpretations could of course be quite different from the original beliefs of the biblical writers, but they do raise the possibility that not all apocalyptic eschatology involved a new world beyond the present historical world of time and space.

The Roots of Biblical Apocalypticism

Because of the general embarrassment that scholars have felt over biblical apocalypticism, there has often been a tendency to see it as a foreign import rather than as an inner-biblical development. Until recently it was common for scholars to argue that apocalypticism was primarily of Persian origin and entered Jewish religion during the exilic period. In support of this argument scholars have noted the importance in Zoroastrianism of such apocalyptic motifs as dualism, angels and demons, life after death and the resurrection of the dead, and the division of world history into periods. In recent years, however, scholars have been more cautious in their assessment of the role that Persian thought might have played in the shaping of biblical apocalypticism. There are two primary reasons for this caution. First, most of the Persian sources that deal with eschatological and cosmological thought are in fact quite late and were written long after the biblical period. This fact has led to numerous debates among Persian specialists concerning the extent to which these late texts actually reflect ancient Persian practices and beliefs. Second, the parallels that some scholars have seen between biblical and Persian eschatological motifs operate at a very general level. For example, Persian literature does indeed seem to be the earliest ancient Near Eastern source for the division of history into specific eras, a feature of some Jewish apocalypses which is not found in earlier biblical literature. However, having made that general point, it is important to recognize that the divisions themselves are very different in the two types of literature. The same is true in the case of belief in a cosmic dualism and in resurrection of the dead, both of which are not clearly attested in biblical literature until the Persian period. In these instances too, however, the details differ greatly, and it is clear that if Jewish communities did borrow Persian eschatological ideas, those ideas received a distinctive Jewish development. Thus, while Persian influence on biblical apocalypticism cannot be ruled out, that influence seems to have been quite general and may have involved indirect borrowing from the increasingly complex mix of cultures that made up the Hellenistic world.[11]

Setting aside the older notion that biblical apocalypticism was heavily influenced by Persian beliefs, some scholars have recently noted apparent literary parallels to biblical apocalypses in both Mesopotamia and Egypt.

The Mesopotamian texts in question have been variously labelled prophecies, apocalypses, and 'fictional Akkadian royal autobiographies'. In form they seem to have been composed as complete unified texts rather than as collections of oracles delivered on different occasions. With minor variations, all of the known texts follow roughly the same organizational pattern. They seem to have begun with an identification of the speaker, although this point is not altogether certain since the beginnings of some of the texts are poorly preserved. In at least two texts the speaker is either a god (Marduk) or a deified king (Shulgi), although this may not be typical of the whole genre. Following the introduction, the speaker gives an overview of coming political events. This historical survey is structured by the repeated use of a formula such as 'a prince/king will arise'. The rulers are never explicitly named, but sometimes their countries are identified and the exact length of their reigns indicated. Each reign is then evaluated positively or negatively. Usually the evaluation is given in general terms using stereotypical phrases drawn from omen apodeses, but sometimes there are specific references to military expeditions, building activities or internal political affairs. The texts seem to have ended with an elaboration of the reign of the ruler who was the real focus of the writer's interest. It is clear that these texts are 'predictions after the fact' (*vaticinia ex eventu*), and at least some of them were produced in order to support their creators' views of current political events. By grounding contemporary events and the evaluation of these events in prophecies from ancient gods or kings, the writers were able to claim supernatural support for their own views.[12] The literary form of these texts has reminded some scholars of the symbolic recitals of history in apocalypses of the sort found in Daniel, and the possibility of some literary influence on the biblical material is not out of the question. However, as Collins and others have noted, the function of the Mesopotamian texts seems rather different from that of the Jewish and Christian apocalypses, which also exhibit a greater variety of literary forms.[13]

Similarly, scholars have recently pointed to a particular genre of Egyptian texts as possible parallels to the biblical apocalypses. These texts, often called 'prophecies', all have roughly the same form, although they may not all have been used in the same way. In a typical text the Egyptian king is treated to a historical recital of events, which may include prophecies and exhortations to the king to reform his kingdom. 'King Cheops and the Magicians', for example, features a sage named Dedi, who predicts the birth of three kings who will found a new dynasty, thus bringing to an end Cheops's own royal line. In the 'Prophecies of Neferti' a priest describes in horrifying detail the

chaos that will descend on Egypt in the future. However, he also predicts the coming of a righteous king, who will restore order and bring justice and peace to the land. This particular text was probably produced in the reign of a usurper king, who used it to support his own governmental reforms. Finally, there are several Egyptian texts from the Hellenistic Period ('The Prophecy of the Lamb', 'The Oracle of the Potter' and 'The Demotic Chronicle') which all talk about a time of chaos in the land (presumably the Hellenistic period itself) and predict the overthrow of foreign rulers and the restoration of native Egyptian power. These texts too remind scholars of the historical apocalypses in Daniel, which also end with the overthrow of foreign rulers, and it is quite possible that texts such as these were known in learned circles in the Hellenistic world out of which the biblical apocalypses came. However, the parallels with the biblical material are rather general, and the functions of the texts seem to have been different, so most scholars today discount the possibility of major Egyptian influence.[14]

With most scholars today tending to rule out the possibility of direct borrowing to account for the appearance of apocalypticism in the Bible, the question of the roots of the phenomenon has become more complex. In assessing the current state of scholarship on the issue, it will be helpful to look again at the three aspects of biblical apocalypticism that we treated earlier. As far as apocalyptic religion is concerned, the comparative evidence suggests that the phenomenon can arise independently in a number of different cultures, so there is no need to invoke borrowing to account for the appearance of apocalypticism in the biblical world. Paul Hanson and others, therefore, are certainly right in looking for the roots of apocalypticism in the first instance within the biblical traditions themselves.[15] In the case of the New Testament examples, it is clear that Jewish apocalypticism, both inside the Bible and outside of it, exerted a major influence on Christian apocalypticism. In the case of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, a number of features of apocalyptic religion were already part of Israel's worldview. To begin with, the idea of a God who intervened in human affairs was already deeply imbedded in Israelite belief, as was the concept of the election of the nation or a smaller group within it as the people of God. Furthermore, the notion of predicting future activities by God was already a part of the prophetic traditions, which often spoke of divine acts of judgment and salvation. Israel's prophets certainly spoke to contemporary situations in their own time, but their words always implied or explicitly mentioned a future of weal or woe, to be determined by their hearers' responses to the prophets' words. Such thinking about the future is an integral part of even the earliest of Israel's prophetic writings, which already look forward to a massive divine judgment to take place on the 'Day of the Lord' (Amos 4: 6–13; 5: 16–20).

Furthermore, even in these early texts the notion of the cosmic character of God's actions is already present. Similarly, prophetic literature, at least in the Isaiah tradition, recognized the necessity of interpreting divine oracles over and over again, not because the first interpretations were wrong, but because the divine oracles themselves were thought to be capable of more than a single fulfilment (Isaiah 7–9). It is only a short step from thinking in this way about prophecy to the world of the apocalyptic writers, who believed that divine messages said more than their surface meaning indicated and therefore required a revealed interpretation to be understood (Daniel 9).

Turning to the question of apocalyptic literature, influence from the surrounding culture is not out of the question, but in this case too certain literary features that appear in the apocalypses are already found in Israelite tradition, particularly in the prophetic traditions. As Hanson has demonstrated, certain circles in Israel knew and used mythological images from the surrounding Near Eastern culture, and the reappearance of these images in apocalyptic literature can therefore be treated as an internal Israelite development.[16] In the writings of the prophet Ezekiel, the literary motif of visionary travel already appears, as does the heavenly guide who explains what the prophet is unable to understand (Ezekiel 8–11).

Finally, in the case of apocalyptic eschatology, at least some of the common motifs are already available in the biblical traditions, although in this instance outside influence may have played a greater role. The restoration of the Davidic kingship is already present in prophetic texts, including Ezekiel, which may also speak, at least metaphorically, of the resurrection of the dead (Ezekiel 34–7). Ideas about judgment and salvation are clearly present, although the sense of finality suggested in the apocalypses has not yet developed. On the other hand, certain eschatological motifs seem to be in tension with the general perspectives of the biblical texts. In particular the notion of a genuine dualism in heaven would be quite foreign to orthodox biblical thought, even though the biblical writers knew about angelic figures of various sorts and even about a tempter figure (the satan [1 Kings 22; Job 1–2]). In brief, then, biblical apocalypticism is a complex phenomenon that develops in the Hellenistic world, where it probably absorbs influences from the surrounding culture. Many of its roots, however, seem to lie within the biblical tradition itself, and that should be the first place to look when trying to understand later Jewish and Christian apocalypticism.

II

Judaism, Christianity and Islam

Eschatological Dynamics and Utopian Ideals in Early Judaism

John J. Collins

The idea of a millennium, in the sense of an eschatological or utopian ideal, is derived from the Book of Revelation, chapter 20. At the climax of history, after the Word of God has appeared from heaven with a sharp sword issuing from his mouth, we are told that the Devil and Satan will be confined in a bottomless pit for a thousand years. At the same time, those who had been put to death for their testimony to Jesus come to life, and reign with Christ for a thousand years. At the end of this period, Satan will be released, and Gog and Magog will march on 'the beloved city' (Jerusalem), only to be consumed by fire from heaven. Then follows the general resurrection, final judgment and new creation. The millennium proper, however, is the intermediate period, while Satan is confined and the martyred dead are resurrected for some special quality time with Jesus before the final denouement. This period lasts a millennium; it is not said to come at the end of a millennium. The Book of Revelation gives no reason to associate the Second Coming of Christ with the passing of a thousand years. The division of history into millennia had an important place in Persian apocalypticism, in compositions like the *Bahman Yasht*, but the importance attached to millennia in popular Christian eschatology seems to be a mistaken understanding of the millennium in the Book of Revelation.

The Study of Modern Apocalypticism

The modern study of Jewish and Christian apocalypticism dates from the early nineteenth century.[1] The first comprehensive study of the subject was published by Friedrich Lücke in 1832.[2] Significantly, Lücke's study was published in connection with a study of the Book of Revelation. Other literature was recognized as 'apocalyptic' because it resembled the New Testament

book. At the same time, the impetus for recognizing a category of apocalyptic literature came from the discovery of the Ethiopic Book of Enoch, which was edited and published by Richard Laurence in 1821.[3] Increasingly, Jewish apocalyptic literature came to be appreciated as a corpus with its own integrity, to the point where some scholars have disputed whether the Book of Revelation should be considered 'apocalyptic' at all.[4]

Lücke's corpus of Jewish apocalyptic writings consisted of Daniel, 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra and the *Sibylline Oracles*. In the course of the nineteenth century this corpus was expanded by the discovery of such texts as 2 and 3 Baruch, 2 Enoch, and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. All of these apocalyptic writings belonged to the broader category of Jewish pseudepigrapha. They are ostensibly revelations received by ancient worthies, who were not the actual authors. These texts had not been preserved in Jewish tradition or in Semitic languages, but by oriental Christian churches in Ethiopic (1 Enoch), Syriac (2 Baruch) or Old Slavonic (2 Enoch, *Apocalypse of Abraham*). Most of the relevant texts were edited by R. H. Charles of Oxford and his collaborators and made available to the English-speaking world in his collection of *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* in 1913.[5]

For much of the twentieth century, however, the study of apocalypticism focused not on these pseudepigraphic texts, which were written in languages unfamiliar to most biblical scholars, but on the biblical corpus itself. Apocalypticism was generally seen as an outgrowth of biblical prophecy,[6] and the category was extended to include parts of the books of Isaiah (especially chapters 24–27), Ezekiel and Zechariah.[7] The climax of this strand of scholarship may be represented by the work of Paul Hanson, who located 'The Dawn of Apocalyptic' in early post-exilic prophecy.[8] An alternative approach was advocated by Gerhard von Rad, in the context of his *Theology of the Old Testament*.[9] Von Rad saw the roots of apocalypticism in wisdom rather than in prophecy, but this view was widely seen as counter-intuitive, at least in the English-speaking world. In New Testament scholarship, 'apocalyptic' increasingly became a theological concept, quite independent of the ancient Jewish texts which were often dismissed as 'abstruse and fantastic'.[10]

A turning point in the modern study of apocalyptic literature was represented by Klaus Koch's polemical monograph *Ratlos vor der Apokalyptik* (1970; English translation, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, 1972).[11] Koch called for a return to the primary apocalyptic texts, and a study of 'apocalyptic' as a literary type. This challenge was taken up by a task-force in the Society of Biblical Literature, culminating in a schematic but comprehensive analysis of apocalypse as a literary genre, and published in *Semeia* 14 (1979).[12] This analysis provided the basis for my own study of the Jewish apocalypses, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (1984, 1998).[13] At the same time there was a revival

of interest in the pseudepigrapha, reflected in part in the new, enlarged, collection of annotated translations edited by James Charlesworth (1983–85).[14] Renewed interest in the broader, international context of apocalypticism was reflected in the proceedings of the 1979 Uppsala Colloquium[15] and more recently in the comprehensive *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*.[16]

These more recent studies have altered the traditional perception of Jewish apocalypticism in several ways.

The first of these concerns the nature of the phenomenon. In popular consciousness, millennialism and apocalypticism are primarily concerned with the expectation of the end of the world, and the calculation of the date at which this will occur. This expectation certainly plays a part in the apocalyptic literature of ancient Judaism and early Christianity, but it is by no means the whole story. The Book of Daniel is the only ancient apocalypse that gives a clear calculation of when the 'end' would occur. At the same time, apocalypses are concerned with the revelation not only of the future but also of the heavenly world.[17] Angels are ubiquitous in this literature, as are visions of the divine throne and the abodes of the dead. One may distinguish two strands in this literature, one of which is primarily concerned with the course of history and the final judgment (Daniel, Book of Revelation, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch), while the other places its main emphasis on the heavenly world (the Enoch literature, 3 Baruch, *Apocalypse of Abraham*). All the apocalypses, however, envision some kind of Final Judgment and have some role for angels and the heavenly world.

The second revision of traditional views concerns the origin of apocalypticism. All the texts that can reasonably be classified as apocalypses date from the Hellenistic period or later. The earliest exemplars are found in the books of Enoch and Daniel in the early second century BCE. Some scholars would put 'the dawn of apocalyptic' some centuries earlier, in the prophetic texts of the Persian period, especially the book of Zechariah and the last chapters of the Book of Isaiah.[18] This position is not without merit. The apocalyptic texts of the Hellenistic period stand in a continuum with Hebrew prophecy that stretches back to the pre-exilic period. The division of such a tradition into periods entails judgments about the significance of similarities and differences, and these may be evaluated differently depending on the interests of the interpreter. Again, the books we call apocalyptic have significant differences among themselves, and these too admit of different evaluations. The books of Enoch and Daniel can not, in my judgment, be attributed to a single movement. They nevertheless share certain features that were novel over against the earlier prophetic tradition and that became distinctively characteristic of subsequent apocalyptic literature. We shall return to discuss these features shortly.

A third issue on which recent scholarship calls for a revision of traditional views is the relation of Jewish apocalypticism to its international context. It is now apparent that Jewish apocalypticism was not an isolated phenomenon. Aspects of apocalyptic literature can be paralleled in texts from Mesopotamia (dream interpretation),[19] Egypt (the judgment of the dead),[20] Greece and Rome (sibylline oracles; afterlife mythology).[21] Throughout the Near East and Mediterranean world, oracles spoke of the rise and fall of kingdoms, and were used as propaganda for revolutionary change. The most complete parallels to the Jewish apocalypses are found in Persian tradition.[22] The *Bahman Yasht*, a *zand* or interpretation of a lost book of the Avesta, is presented as a revelation to Zarathustra.[23] He sees a tree with four branches, of gold, silver, steel and mixed iron. These are interpreted as four kingdoms, and the fourth kingdom is said to coincide with the tenth millennium. (There is also a vision in which the tree has seven branches.) The work goes on to speak of the signs of the tenth millennium, the coming of a saviour and the resurrection. The sequence of four kingdoms, each associated with a metal and the fourth partly of clay, is so similar to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel chapter 2 that we must assume some common tradition.[24] The relation of the Persian material to Jewish apocalypticism is obscured by problems of dating, since the Pahlavi literature in which these traditions are preserved dates from the early Middle Ages. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that some prominent features of Jewish apocalypses, such as the division of history into numbered periods (e.g. the four kingdoms in Daniel 2 and 7) and the belief in resurrection, were innovations in Judaism and seem to have an integral role in Persian tradition. It would be too simple to think that Jewish apocalypticism was simply derived from Persian models, but it is reasonable to suppose that there was some influence. A specific case of Persian influence on Jewish apocalyptic ideas can be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which envision humanity divided between Spirits of Light and Darkness, in a manner reminiscent of Zoroastrianism.[25]

The Novel Features of Jewish Apocalypticism

Several features distinguish the Jewish apocalyptic writings from biblical prophecy and earlier Jewish tradition. Some of these concern the manner in which revelation is conveyed, and some concern its content. The recipients of apocalyptic revelation are typically pseudonymous figures of considerable antiquity. Enoch supposedly lived before the flood and had been taken up to heaven, so he was especially qualified to reveal heavenly mysteries. Daniel was a legendary figure, who had supposedly been taken captive to Babylon, and was skilled in the interpretation of dreams. Pseudonymity was widespread in the ancient world, and in the Hebrew Bible – witness the attribution of

Deuteronomy to Moses, of Psalms to David and of Proverbs to Solomon. But the use of the device in Enoch and Daniel was novel over against the prophetic tradition. These ancient sages were not the ultimate guarantors of the revelation. They in turn had received it from angelic mediators, who explained their visions, or, in the case of Enoch, served as tour guides beyond the realm of ordinary human experience. Angelic mediators were known in the prophetic tradition, and figure prominently in the post-exilic book of Zechariah and in Ezekiel 40–48. The difference here is only one of degree; the angelic figures appear more consistently in apocalyptic writings, and individual angels are given names (e.g. Michael and Gabriel in the Book of Daniel). Their role is to underline the otherworldly character of the revelation. The content of the apocalypses is not supposed to be accessible to unaided human reason, but is avowedly out of this world.

More important than these formal differences are the differences in content over against the prophets. Two features seem to me to be crucial: the increased prominence of angelic and demonic figures and the expectation of the judgment of the dead.

The Italian scholar Paolo Sacchi has argued at length that the wellspring of apocalypticism is the problem of evil or theodicy, and that the apocalyptic response is to explain this problem by appeal to angelic or demonic agency.[26] The paradigmatic case of such an explanation is found in the Enochic *Book of the Watchers* (1 Enoch 1–36), which tells of a rebellion in heaven among the sons of God. This story is modified in Jubilees, where the leader of the rebel angels is called Mastema. A different paradigm of the origin of evil is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where the opposing spirits of Light and Darkness are created from the beginning by God. But the destiny of human beings is still shaped by the angelic spirits to whose lot they belong. The Book of Daniel does not address the question of the origin of evil so directly, but there are clear mythological overtones in Daniel chapter 7 where the Gentile kingdoms are portrayed as beasts rising from the primordial sea. Superhuman, angelic agency is also manifested in other ways. In Daniel, for example, the conflict between Jews and Greeks in the Hellenistic era is conceived as a struggle between the archangel Michael and the holy ones in heaven and the angelic (or demonic) prince of Greece. The *Animal Apocalypse* (1 Enoch 83–91), written about the same time, speaks of angelic shepherds of the nations, and of a heavenly 'man' who comes to the aid of Judas Maccabee. All of this can be seen as an adaptation of common Near Eastern mythology, but the role of these angelic figures is more prominent in the apocalypses than in the earlier writings of the prophets. The effect is a sense that the outcome of history is not in human control, but is largely in the hands of principalities and powers.

The most fundamental difference between the Jewish apocalypses and the Hebrew prophets in my view concerns the judgment of the dead. The Hebrew Bible is extreme in the literature of the ancient world in its rejection of reward and punishment after death. There are, to be sure, some ambiguous passages, where some scholars find evidence of resurrection or even of beatific vision in the afterlife.[27] The only form of resurrection that is securely attested before the Hellenistic period, however, is the resurrection of the Jewish people after the exile, as we find it in Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37), and also, I would argue, in Isaiah 26: 19.[28] In both Enoch and Daniel, however, we have a hope of human transformation after death. Enoch has a vision of chambers under a mountain where the spirits of the dead are divided into separate categories (1 Enoch 22). More typical, however, is transformation to an angelic state. In Daniel 12 we are told that the righteous teachers will shine like the stars. The significance of this imagery is made clear by comparison with 1 Enoch 104: 'Be hopeful! ... you will shine like the lights of heaven and will be seen, and the gate of heaven will be opened to you ... for you will have great joy like the angels of heaven ... for you shall be associates of the host of heaven.' What is envisioned here is not resurrection of the body to renewed life on earth, but the exaltation of the 'spiritual body' or *nefesh* to angelic life in heaven. In the Hebrew Bible only an elect few, Enoch, Moses and Elijah, could be said to share this destiny, because of the mysterious nature of their departures. In the apocalyptic literature, such transformation becomes the hope of all the righteous.

The implications of this new hope were far-reaching. In most of the Hebrew Bible the goal of life was to live long in the land and to see one's children and one's children's children to the third or fourth generation. The hope of the individual was very closely bound up with the hope of the people of Israel. The blessings and curses of the covenant relate to the people as a whole, not just to individuals. The apocalypses do not break completely with this traditional, corporate utopian ideal. Daniel, for example, still speaks of the kingdom that will be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High. Later apocalypses envision a messianic kingdom, and the ingathering of the exiles. But new element has also been introduced, where the destiny of the individual is not dependent on progeny, or on the restoration of Israel. In the Book of Daniel, the heroes are the wise teachers, *maskilim*, some of whom lose their lives in the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes. In ancient Israel, premature death was an unqualified disaster. The martyrs of the Maccabean era, however, are assured that they will be exalted to the stars, and become companions to the angels. They can afford to lose their lives in this world, because they have a greater destiny beyond death.

The transformation of values entailed by the hope of an angelic immortality

is also evident in contexts where martyrdom is not an issue. In the *Book of the Watchers*, the sin of the fallen angels is that they have abandoned the angelic life:

> Why have you left the high, holy and eternal heaven, and lain with the women and become unclean with the daughters of men, and taken wives for yourselves, and done as the sons of the earth and begotten giant sons? You were spiritual, holy, living an eternal life, but you became unclean upon the women, and begat children through the blood of flesh, and lusted after the blood of men, and produced flesh and blood as they do who die and are destroyed … You formerly were spiritual, living an eternal, immortal life for all the generations of the world. For this reason I did not arrange wives for you because the dwelling of the spiritual ones is in heaven. (1 Enoch 15)

Enoch's career is the exact opposite of that of the Watchers. He is a human being, taken up to heaven and, at least in later apocalypses, transformed into an angel.[29] He is paradigmatic of the righteous. In the Gospels we are told that in the next life people will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but will be like the angels in heaven. It is not difficult to see how such a utopian ideal could lead to an ascetic life-style, perhaps even to the adoption of celibacy. We shall return to this issue below apropos of the Qumran community.

In light of the discussion so far, we can begin to appreciate how the eschatological dynamics of this literature worked. Perhaps the clearest case is provided by Daniel or by the *Testament of Moses*, where, in a time of persecution, a man called Taxo and his sons purify themselves and die, so that the kingdom of God may appear and Israel be exalted to the stars.[30] In the face of a crisis where there is imminent danger of death, the apocalyptic revelation reassures the reader that the threat is not ultimate, or rather that the ultimate threat is not death but eternal damnation in the hereafter. For one who believes this, there is no reason to break the law or to compromise one's religious commitment in any way. Life is lived with an eye to the Final Judgment, and the criteria for that judgment are of paramount importance. In a situation of persecution, time and duration are also important issues. Daniel is the only Jewish apocalypse that tries to calculate the time of the 'end', or divine deliverance. We can readily understand why. The more extreme the crisis, the more urgent the need to know when it will end.

Not all apocalypses were written in situations of persecution. Some twenty years ago, I edited an analysis of ancient apocalypses, published in *Semeia* 14, that proposed a definition and described what we called 'the morphology of a genre'.[31] The aspect of that analysis that drew most criticism at the time was that we did not include a statement of function in the definition. The

point, of course, was not that apocalypses did not have a function, or that, as one critic put it, the genre did not do anything;[32] rather, the point was whether all apocalypses necessarily function in the same way. Our refusal to include a statement of function in the definition was in large part a reaction against the common view of apocalypses as crisis literature in a narrow sense, written in the heat of persecution like Daniel, and supposedly but questionably, Revelation. Several apocalypses were written in situations of lesser urgency, and in calmer tones. In light of the subsequent discussion, however, I would agree that one may generalize that apocalypses were written to console and exhort and, in the case of the Jewish apocalypses from antiquity, addressed crises of some sort.[33] These generalizations, however, are in need of some qualification.

First, crisis, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. The crisis in Daniel is obvious enough, and this is also true of the apocalypses written after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. In the *Book of the Watchers*, however, the crisis is described in allegorical terms, through the story of the fallen angels, and it does not involve persecution in any case. Rather, it is a matter of cultural change, arising in part from technological innovation:

> And Azazel taught men to make swords, and daggers, and shields and breast-plates. And he showed them the things after these, and the art of making them: bracelets, and ornaments, and the art of making up the eyes and of beautifying the eyelids, and the most precious and choice stones, and all kinds of coloured dyes. And the world was changed. And there was great impiety and much fornication, and they went astray, and all their ways became corrupt. (1 Enoch 8)

It is, of course, debatable how far this description should be taken to reflect any specific historical situation, but it is hardly coincidental that this account appears in a document from the Hellenistic period. The impact of Hellenism on the Near East can be imagined by analogy with that of Western culture on traditional Middle Eastern societies in modern times. The superior power and knowledge of the new culture was dazzling, but the confidence in human capability and lack of modesty with respect to the human body were shocking. The impact of Hellenism on traditional Judaism is writ large in the story of the so-called Hellenistic reform in 2 Maccabees, but it must have been felt in less extreme form for a century before that. I would suggest, then, that the earliest Enoch apocalypses reflect a kind of culture shock; dismay at the way that the world was changed and a flight in imagination, with Enoch on the clouds of heaven, to a world where God was in control and everything in order. Later Enochic writings, such as the *Epistle of Enoch* (1 Enoch 91–108) and the *Similitudes* (1 Enoch 37–71), are more concerned with problems of social injustice, which are perceived by the authors as

constituting a crisis, but which were endemic to Judean society (and not only to it) for centuries, and were not necessarily peculiarly acute when these apocalypses were written.

Nevertheless, I think there is merit in the view that all the Jewish apocalypses, at least, reflect crises of some sort. All of them profess the view that this world is out of joint. It is possible in principle to find also an apocalypticism of the powerful, or a triumphalist millennialism, and examples of this can be found in the Christian use of millennialism in the Middle Ages. I am not persuaded, however, by attempts to find it in Jewish antiquity. Stephen Cook has argued that we find an example of triumphant millennialism in the prophecies of Zechariah, and his celebration of the restoration under Zerubbabel and the High Priest Josiah.[34] But while Zechariah was close to the centre of power in Judah, the Jewish province was marginal in the Persian empire, and very far from the kind of eschatological fulfilment that had been predicted by the prophets. Again, Albert Baumgarten has argued for triumphant millennialism in the case of the Maccabees.[35] It is true that the description of the reign of Simon Maccabee (1 Maccabees 14: 4–15) has eschatological overtones. Nevertheless, it seems to me to fall well short of apocalyptic expectations. Most crucially, it lacks the claim of definitive fulfilment, of a kingdom that would not pass away. It seems to me, then, that the perception of ancient Jewish apocalyptic literature as crisis literature is essentially accurate, given the significant qualification that the crises might be of various kinds.

It is also fair to say that apocalyptic literature was meant to console and exhort, but again we should grant that these terms cover a multitude of more specific illocutional functions. David Aune has proposed a more nuanced formulation: an apocalypse is intended (a) to legitimate the transcendent authorization of the message, (b) by mediating a new actualization of the original revelatory experience through literary devices, structures and imagery, which function to 'conceal' the message which the text 'reveals', so that (c) 'the recipients of the message will be encouraged to modify their cognitive and behavioral stance in conformity with transcendent perspectives'.[36] I do not propose to repeat Aune's discussion of this formulation, but only to comment on one point. Direct exhortation, such as we find habitually in the prophets, is relatively rare in apocalyptic texts, although there are some exceptions. What is more typical of apocalyptic writings is that they give a descriptive account of the world as they see it, and leave the reader to infer the proper course of action. They aim, first of all, to change perception and understanding. They want to persuade the reader that Belial is loose on the earth, that Michael is championing their cause in heaven, or that the places of judgment are already prepared. Anyone who really believes these things will inevitably modify his behaviour. Consequently, I agree with Aune that it

is not sufficient to say that apocalypses are written to console and exhort. They are written first of all to persuade the reader of hidden realities.

The function of apocalyptic literature obviously has some bearing on why it should first emerge in the Hellenistic period. Undoubtedly the crisis that enveloped Judaism in the Maccabean era gave impetus to apocalyptic revelations, just as the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans did, more than two centuries later. But these crises were not sufficient causes for the development of apocalypticism. They were no more severe than other pre-Hellenistic crises, such as the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The particular phenomenon of Jewish apocalypticism was also shaped by the confluence of traditions that was characteristic of the Hellenistic age. Jews were exposed to Greek thought on the one side, and Persian and Babylonian ideas on the other. The genesis of the new genre was influenced both by this cultural mixing and by the new crises confronting the Jewish community, but of course we can never fully explain why a particular author chose to express himself in one way rather than another.

The Case of Qumran

Against the background of this general account of apocalypticism, I would like to discuss the particular case of Qumran, which is often described as an apocalyptic community.[37] The anomaly of Qumran, for purposes of this discussion, is that while the central writings of the sect are profoundly influenced by apocalyptic ideas, these writings are not in the form of apocalypses. Several copies of the books of Enoch and Daniel were found at Qumran, and there are several fragmentary writings, primarily in Aramaic, which may have been formulated as heavenly revelations, but none of these is clearly a product of the Dead Sea sect. The distinctive sectarian writings take the form of rule-books, hymns or biblical commentaries. Even the War Scroll, which speaks of the final War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness, is in the form of *serek*, or rule-book, and is in large part a manual giving instructions for the conduct of the war.

Nevertheless, these Scrolls are imbued with a worldview that can reasonably be called apocalyptic. Human beings are manipulated by the Spirits of Light and Darkness in which they partake. History is divided into periods, and the penultimate period, the 'End of Days', is either imminent or already begun. The outcome of history will be decided by a war between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness, led by Michael and Belial respectively. Life is lived in anticipation of eternal rewards and punishments: for the righteous there is 'everlasting blessing and eternal joy in life without end, a crown of glory and a garment of majesty in unending light' (Scroll of the Rule [hereafter

1QS] 4: 6–8). For the wicked, conversely, there shall be 'a multitude of plagues by the hand of all the destroying angels, everlasting damnation by the avenging wrath of the fury of God, eternal torment and endless disgrace together with shameful extinction in the fire of the dark regions' (1QS 4: 11–14). All of this is quite typical of what we usually find in apocalypses.

The fact that these teachings are not presented in the form of apocalyptic visions, authorized by angelic authority, seems to be due to the role of the Teacher of Righteousness in the formation of the sect, and the emphasis that he placed on the traditional Torah and the Prophets. In the Damascus Document (hereafter CD), the structure of revelation is explained with reference to an obscure passage in Numbers 21: 18: 'the well which the princes dug, which the nobles of the people delved with the staff':

> The Well is the Law, and those who dug it were the converts of Israel who went out of the land of Judah to sojourn in the land of Damascus. God called them all princes because they sought Him, and their renown was disputed by no man. The staff is the Interpreter of the Law of whom Isaiah said, He makes a tool for his work; and the nobles of the people are those who come to dig the well with the staffs which the staff ordained that they should walk in all the age of wickedness – and without them they shall find nothing – until he comes who shall teach righteousness at the end of days. (CD 6: 4–11)

Here, the authoritative Interpreter of the Law is the figure usually called the Teacher of Righteousness, while an even more definitive teacher is still expected at the end of days.[38] Again, a famous passage in the Pesher on Habakkuk claims that God did not give the prophet full understanding of what he wrote down, but made known to the Teacher of Righteousness 'all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets' (IQpHab col. 7).

The apocalypses of Daniel and Enoch certainly make use of older scriptures as sources of revelation – think, for example, of Daniel's use of Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy years (Daniel 9). But such explicit interpretation of scripture is exceptional in the apocalypses, and where it is found it is reinforced by the authority of an angel. The pseudonymous authors of the apocalypses lack the authority of the Teacher, but they also have a different mode of operation. They are visionaries, somewhat analogous to the prophets of old, or at least to some of them. The Teacher is a wisdom teacher, and interpreter of the Law. While the Teacher and his community knew and were influenced by the apocalypses, he can scarcely have been a product of the same community. The different valuing of the scriptures and the different manner of revelation are some of the reasons why we should not attribute the Enoch literature and the Scrolls to a single movement, or speak of the apocalypses as Essene.[39]

There was also a significant difference between the sectarian Scrolls and the apocalypses in their future expectations. Daniel, famously, culminates with the resurrection of the dead, and this expectation also plays a pivotal role in the Enochic writings. The resurrection in question is not evidently physical; we might speak more appropriately of the resurrection of the spirit. But it is a resurrection, in the sense that it is an event that is expected at a future time. The language of resurrection is strangely lacking in the sectarian Scrolls. The only clear examples (4Q 521, the 'messianic apocalypse', and 4Q 385, 'pseudo-Ezekiel') are clearly not of sectarian provenance. The reason for this, as has long been recognized, is that the sectarians believed that they were already living the angelic life:

> I thank thee, O Lord, for thou hast redeemed my soul from the Pit, and from the hell of Abaddon thou hast raised me up to everlasting height. I walk on limitless level ground and I know there is hope for him whom thou has shaped from dust for the everlasting council. Thou has cleansed a perverse spirit of great sin that it may stand with the host of the Holy Ones and that it may enter into community with the congregation of the Sons of Heaven. (IQH 11: 19–23)

Or again:

> Thou has purified man of sin that he may be made holy for thee, with no abominable uncleanness and no guilty wickedness; that he may be one [with] the children of thy truth and partake of the lot of thy Holy Ones; that the worm of the dead may be raised from the dust to the counsel [of thy truth], and that the perverse spirit (may be lifted) to the understanding [which comes from thee]; that he may stand before thee with the everlasting host and with [thy] spirits [of holiness], to be renewed together with all the living and to rejoice together with them that know. (10JI 19: 10–42)

In short, the sectarians by the Dead Sea claimed to enjoy already in their community the fellowship with the angels that was promised to the righteous after death in the apocalypses of Enoch and Daniel.

The Utopian Ideals of Qumran

What, then, can be said about the utopian ideals of the Dead Sea sect? As in most Jewish apocalypses, they are of two kinds, one corporate, national and public and the other differentiated, personal and spiritual. The public eschatology is ushered in by the war against the Gentiles, and issues in a messianic age. Messianism, in the sense of the restoration of Jewish kingdom, was conspicuously lacking in the early apocalypses of Enoch and Daniel. It emerges in the Scrolls, probably in reaction to the restoration of a Jewish

kingship by the Hasmoneans.[40] As is well known, the Dead Sea sect expected two messiahs, and as Shemaryahu Talmon and others have shown it hearkens back to the structure of leadership in the early Second Temple period.[41] The royal messiah is the military figure, but the messianic High Priest takes precedence, as he also did in some texts from the Persian period. The Scrolls are quite reticent as to the nature of messianic society. We do, however, have a number of texts (the Temple Scroll, the New Jerusalem text) that provide elaborate prescriptions for a utopian or an eschatological temple. The War Rule presupposes that a purified and legitimate temple cult will be in operation during the final war. It would seem, then, that the utopian societal ideal of the Dead Sea sect had a cultic focus. The sect expected the elimination of the wicked and the restoration of a purified Israel, but their main concern, in so far as we can infer it from the texts, was with a purified cult.

The personal eschatology of the Scrolls is not spelled out in detail either, beyond the few passages that we have already cited. The most suggestive text in this regard is the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, which, admittedly, is not properly an eschatological text at all. The Songs consist of separate compositions for each of thirteen sabbaths, which call on the angels to give praise and give descriptive statements about the praise-giving of the heavenly beings. The penultimate song has an extensive description of the divine throne-chariot, and the composition ends with a description of the splendour of the angelic high priests. While the purpose of this text has been debated extensively, I am most persuaded by the view originally put forward by the editor, Carol Newsom, that it is

> a quasi-mystical liturgy designed to evoke a sense of being present in the heavenly temple . . . Although no claim is made that the audience which recited or heard the Songs were actually transported to the heavenly realms, the hypnotic quality of the language and the vividness of the description of the celestial temple cause even the modern reader of these fragments to feel the power of the language to create a sense of the presence of the heavenly temple.[42]

One of the Songs reflects on the human condition vis-à-vis the angels: 'how shall we be considered [among] them? And how shall our priesthood (be considered) in their habitations? And our ho[liness - how can it compare with] their [surpassing] holiness? [What] is the offering of our mortal tongue (compared) with the knowledge of the *e[lim*?]' (4Q400 2: 5–7). While the text stops short of describing the exaltation of human beings to heaven, it functions in a manner similar to the apocalypses that describe the ascent of the visionary. The reader is led in imagination through the various heavenly sanctuaries, even to the contemplation of the divine throne. They invite contemplation of an angelic world that is free from the corruption and

defilement that have befallen this world, and specifically the temple cult in Jerusalem.

We are exceptionally well informed about the way the Qumran community proposed to structure its life while waiting for the messianic age.[43] The Community Rule describes a strict hierarchical order, in which everyone sits according to his rank, and obeys his superiors. They eat in common and bless in common and deliberate in common. At least to some degree, they have common property. They should never lack a man among them to study the Law continually, day and night, concerning right conduct, and the congregation should watch in community for a third of every night of the year, to read the Book and to study the Torah and to give praise together. They join in prayer at dawn and dusk and at the beginning of the watches of the night. Strict conformity is required. Any member of the community who turns aside deliberately on any point whatever of all that is commanded is to be cut off. It is generally assumed that the regulations of this Community Rule derived from the Teacher of Righteousness, although he is not actually mentioned in this document.

It is also generally assumed that the community in question belonged to the sect of the Essenes, known to us from the descriptions of Josephus, Philo and Pliny the Elder.[44] Josephus describes a similar regimen, with prayers at dawn, great emphasis on purification, common meals, common property and strict deference to superiors. Both the account in Josephus and the Qumran Community Rule describe elaborate procedures for postulancy and admission, and while some details are problematic, the similarities outweigh the differences. One point of discrepancy, however, has been especially contentious. Josephus, Philo and Pliny all claim that the Essenes were celibate, although Josephus admits that there was a second order of Essenes who married. The Community Rule does not demand celibacy, and the Damascus Document contains rules for family life. Nevertheless, many scholars remain persuaded that some members of the Dead Sea sect were celibate, although the second order mentioned by Josephus may have been the norm rather than the exception. The Damascus Document (CD), column 7, seems to contrast two styles of community life. First, there are those who walk in perfect holiness, according to all the teaching of God. These are assured that 'they shall live for thousands of generations'. The text continues: 'But if they live in camps according to the order of the land and marry and have children …' It seems reasonable to infer that those who walk in perfect holiness do not marry and have children, and this is why they are assured that they shall live for thousands of generations (CD 7: 6–9).[45] Since the Community Rule does not mention families, it may be that it was written for a celibate community, while the Damascus Document applied more widely to various sectarian

settlements. Whether this interpretation be accepted or not, however, there is no doubt that the Dead Sea Scrolls have a restrictive attitude to sex. For example, both the Temple Scroll and the Damascus Document (1 1QTemple 45: 11; CD 12: 1–2) forbid sexual intercourse in the city of the sanctuary (Jerusalem), and a fragment of the Damascus Rule from Qumran Cave 4 speaks of a man 'fornicating' with his wife (4Q270 7il 3).[46] The roots of these restrictions can be found in the aspiration to live an angelic life, and is in accordance with the principle that 'no man smitten with any human uncleanness shall enter the assembly of God . . . for the angels of holiness are [with] their congre[gation]' (1QSa 2: 3–9).

Thus far I have been describing an early phase, or rather early phases, of Jewish apocalypticism. We are not speaking of a single movement. There are differences between the Enoch literature and Daniel, and significant differences between both and the Dead Sea sect. But there is also clear continuity. The Dead Sea sect drew on both Enoch and Daniel, while it also attached much more importance to the Hebrew Scriptures, and even drew on occasion from other sources such as Zoroastrian dualism. Perhaps the most noteworthy difference is between a book like Daniel, written at a critical juncture in history, and informed by an acute sense of expectation, and the larger corpus of the sectarian Scrolls, in which expectation of an end plays a part but is submerged in a structured community life and a sense that eschatology is at least partially realized in the present. I have emphasized, however, the importance of the angelic world, and the hope for angelic transformation in this literature, since this aspect of apocalypticism is quite crucial to the pragmatics of the texts, and it is often overlooked in the general equation of apocalypticism with millennial expectation.[47] The angelic world is not equally important in all forms of Jewish apocalypticism; it is far less prominent in the later apocalypses of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. But it is of great importance in the pivotal stages of Jewish apocalypticism that we have considered here.

Apocalypse as a Medium of Reflection: 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, 3 Baruch

Another major cluster of Jewish apocalypses dates from the end of the first century CE, in the aftermath of the Jewish revolt.[48] 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch and 3 Baruch are all reflections on the catastrophe that had come to pass. While they continue to console and exhort, they represent a rather different use of the genre from that of the early Enoch writings and Daniel. They could scarcely have incited anyone to revolt. Instead they are attempts to understand and come to terms with failure and destruction.

4 Ezra, which is preserved in Latin and several other secondary translations,

stands out among the Jewish apocalypses as the most acute formulation of a theological problem.[49] Ezra, located anachronistically in Babylon thirty years after the destruction of Jerusalem, acknowledges the familiar Deuteronomic theory that the destruction was punishment for sin, but then raises an all too obvious question: 'Are the deeds of Babylon better than those of Zion? Or has another nation known thee besides Israel? Or what tribes have believed thy covenants as these tribes of Jacob?' (3: 31–2). The angel with whom he speaks does not respond to this question directly, but tells Ezra that 'your understanding has utterly failed regarding this world, and do you think you can comprehend the way of the Most High?' (4: 2). He assures him, however, that 'the age is hastening swiftly to its end' (4: 26) and proceeds to tell him the signs that will precede the eschaton. Ezra, however, is not easily deterred. He renews his questions about the justice of God, only to be again diverted with an eschatological prediction (6: 17–28). Yet a third time Ezra probes more deeply: 'O sovereign Lord, behold, thou has ordained in thy law that the righteous shall inherit these things, but that the ungodly shall perish' (7: 17). But in that case most of humankind is doomed to perish: 'For all who have been born are involved in iniquities, and are full of sins and burdened with transgressions' (7: 68). The angel's reply is harsh: 'You are not a better judge than God, or wiser than the Most High! Let many perish who are not living, rather than that the law of God which is set before them be disregarded!' (7: 19–20). The angel urges Ezra to think about what is to come rather than about what now is (7: 16) and discourses on the messianic age and the judgment after death. The Most High, we are told, made not one world but two (7: 50), this world for the sake of the many but the world to come for the sake of the few (8: 1). Ezra is not consoled: 'It would have been better if the earth had not produced Adam, or else, when it had produced him, had restrained him from sinning. For what good is it to all that they live in sorrow now and expect punishment after death? O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants' (7: 116–18). Even though he gradually resigns himself to the will of God, he still comments ruefully on the paucity of those who will be saved (9:15).

After the third dialogue, Ezra is told to go into the field and eat the flowers (9: 24, 26). After this he has a vision of a woman in mourning. At first Ezra scolds her, for being concerned with her personal grief while 'Zion, the mother of us all' is in affliction. Then he tells her not to dwell on her grief but to 'let yourself be persuaded because of the troubles of Zion, and be consoled because of the sorrow of Jerusalem' (10: 20). While he is speaking, she is transformed into a city with massive foundations. Then the angel Uriel appears and explains to Ezra that the woman was Zion and that God had

shown him the future glory of Jerusalem because of his wholehearted grief over her ruin. From this point on, Ezra raises no further complaints. In chapters 11–12 he sees a vision of an eagle rising from the sea, that is confronted by a lion. The eagle stands for Rome, and the lion for the Davidic messiah. In chapter 13 a man rises on clouds from the heart of the sea. He takes his stand on a mountain and repulses the Gentiles, and then gathers in the lost tribes of Israel. In the final chapter, Ezra is inspired to reproduce the Torah that has been burnt, but also seventy secret books that are to be given to 'the wise among your people, for in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom and the river of knowledge' (14: 46–7).

4 Ezra is remarkable for the fact that the pseudonymous author, Ezra, adheres to a theology that is rejected by the angel. Some scholars have argued that Ezra is the voice of heresy, which the author meant to refute,[50] but it is surely implausible that heresy would be given such an authoritative voice. Rather, the dialogue between Ezra and the angel must be taken to reflect the conflict of theologies in the author's heart and mind.[51] In this respect, it is reminiscent of the Book of Job, which also articulates a deeply felt problem before submitting to a divinely imposed solution.[52] Ezra articulates the traditional Deuteronomic theology, but finds it wanting. The angel does nothing to rehabilitate this theology, but tells Ezra in effect that God's ways are inscrutable in this world, and that he must be content to wait for the revelation of justice in the world to come. In the end, the eschatological visions carry the day. The high value placed on the seventy secret books in the final chapter is highly significant. While the Torah remains important, it does not contain 'the spring of understanding and the fountain of wisdom'. That wisdom requires higher revelation, such as Ezra receives in this apocalypse.

The actual eschatology of 4 Ezra, however, is based on the Hebrew scriptures, although the themes are developed in original ways. There is no influence here from the Enoch tradition. The origin of sin is discussed with reference to Adam. There is no mention of the Watchers. The picture of the future combines various strands of traditional eschatology. In chapter 7 the messiah (called 'my son') is said to reign for 400 years and then die. After this, there will be seven days of primeval silence, followed by the resurrection and judgment. In this way, the apocalypse accommodates both the expectation of national restoration under a messianic king and the more typically apocalyptic hope for a new creation. We find a similar two-stage eschatology in the roughly contemporary Book of Revelation, where Christ reigns on earth for 1,000 years before the resurrection and new creation (Revelation 20). In chapters 11–13, 4 Ezra draws heavily on the Book of Daniel. The Roman eagle rises from the sea like the beasts in Daniel 7, and is identified as 'the fourth kingdom which appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel. But it was

not explained to him as I now explain or have explained it to you' (4 Ezra 11: 11–12). The lion, who has no place in Daniel's vision but is derived from Genesis 49: 9, is 'the messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David'. In chapter 13, the man who rises from the sea on clouds is clearly a reinterpretation of the 'one like a son of man' in Daniel. He is identified, however, as the Davidic messiah ('my son') and the description of his stand on the mountain (Zion) is reminiscent of Psalm 2. The messianic age serves to restore Israel, and thereby partially answer one of Ezra's complaints. Ultimately, however, this apocalypse insists that the Most High made not one world but two, and full retribution can be expected only after the resurrection, in the world to come. It should be noted that 4 Ezra has virtually no interest in the heavenly world, despite the role of the revealing angel. There is no sense that the other world is already present, as it is in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Nevertheless, like all apocalypses, it requires the belief that this world is not all there is; hope is based on belief in an alternative universe.

2 Baruch is in many ways a companion piece to 4 Ezra.[53] It is similar in structure and contains both dialogues and visions. Baruch also raises questions about the justice of God, but he does not probe them the way Ezra does. He is more easily satisfied that justice is served by a judgment based on the law: ('justly do they perish who have not loved thy law'; 2 Baruch 54: 14). Like Ezra, Baruch asks, 'O Adam what have you done to all those who are born from you' (48: 42), but a little later he answers his own question: 'Adam is therefore not the cause, save only of his own soul, but each of us has been the Adam of his own soul' (54: 19). In the end, Baruch warns the tribes that 'we have nothing now save the Mighty One and His law' (85: 4). The message of the book is that the Jewish people should keep the law and trust in the justice of God. The teaching accords well with that of mainstream rabbinic Judaism.

This message is framed, however, by an eschatological teaching very similar to that of 4 Ezra. 'The youth of the world is past, and the strength of the creation already exhausted and the advent of the times is very short' (85: 10). There is an elaborate division of history into twelve periods in a vision of a cloud that rains alternately black and white waters (chapters 53–74). The twelfth period, however, is not the last, but the restoration after the exile. This in turn is followed by a dark period, which presumably includes the time of the real author. Finally comes the messianic age, symbolized by lightning. In chapters 27–32 the time of tribulation is divided into twelve woes. Then the messiah is revealed, but after a time 'he will return in glory'. This presumably corresponds to the death of the messiah in 4 Ezra, although it is expressed in more positive terms. The resurrection and judgment follow.

In chapters 35: 1–47, 2 there is an allegorical vision, in which a vine rebukes a cedar. The vine, representing the messiah, rebukes the cedar, just as the lion rebuked the eagle in 4 Ezra. Although there is no allusion to Daniel in the vision, the interpretation identifies a sequence of four kingdoms (chapter 39). Like 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch shows no awareness of the Enoch tradition, but integrates the eschatology of Daniel and of traditional messianism into a Deuteronomic theology.

Yet here again the argument of the book is ultimately dependent on the reality of a hidden world. This idea is seen most clearly seen in the account of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, near the beginning of the book:

> Do you think that this is the city about which I said, On the palms of my hands have I engraved you? This building which now stands in your midst, is not the one that is to be revealed, that is with me now, that was prepared beforehand here at the time when I determined to make Paradise, and showed it to Adam before he sinned (though when he disobeyed my commandment it was taken away from him, as was also Paradise). And after this I showed it to my servant Abraham by night among the divided pieces of the victims. And again I showed it also to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed him the pattern of the tabernacle and all its vessels. And now it is preserved with me, as is also Paradise. (2 Baruch 4: 3–7)

4 Ezra and 2 Baruch can be seen as two voices in the discussion of theodicy in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem. Both have much in common with emerging rabbinic Judaism, and place a high value on the law, although neither deals with specific halachic issues. The common eschatological presuppositions of these works show that such ideas were widely shared in Palestinian Judaism at the end of the first century. Whatever role apocalyptic ideas may have played in stirring up revolutionary fervour at the outbreak of the war, they are not used for that purpose in these books. Here eschatology becomes an element in theological reflection. Although both books assure us that the time is short, neither conveys a great sense of urgency. What is important is that there will be an eventual judgment, that will establish that God is in control. Hope is sustained, but deferred. There is a clear attempt here to integrate different strands of Jewish eschatology, providing both for national restoration on earth and for the resurrection of the dead in a new creation.

A quite different reaction to the destruction of Jerusalem can be found in the Greek apocalypse of 3 Baruch, which was most probably composed in Egypt.[54] This text opens with Baruch grieving over the destruction of Jerusalem. An angel appears to him and tells him: 'Do not be so distressed about the condition of Jerusalem … argue with God no more, and I will show you other mysteries greater than these … Come and I will show you the mysteries

of God.' The angel then escorts Baruch on an upward tour of five heavens. (There has been much speculation as to whether there were originally seven, the usual number in apocalypses of this period, but there is no good reason to believe that anything has been lost. Rather, Baruch's revelation is limited in so far as he is not taken up to the highest heaven.) In the course of this ascent he sees various cosmological mysteries and also the places where the dead are rewarded and punished. In the fifth heaven he sees the archangel Michael, who takes the merits of the righteous up to the presence of the Lord. It appears that people are judged strictly on their individual merits regardless of their membership of a covenant people. The final chapter of the apocalypse indicates that Israel has suffered the curses of the covenant: 'inasmuch as they angered me by what they did, go and make them jealous and angry and embittered against a people that is no people, against a people that has no understanding. And more – afflict them with caterpillar and maggot and rust and locust and hail with flashes of lightning and wrath and smite them with sword and with death, and their children with demons. For they did not heed my voice, neither did they observe my commandments nor do them' (3 Baruch 16: 2–3). The reference to 'a people that is no people' alludes to Deuteronomy 32: 21, while the remainder of the passage recalls the curses of the covenant (Leviticus 26: 16; Deuteronomy 32: 24). A Jew might take some comfort in the thought that the Romans are 'a people that is no people', but there is little consolation for Israel here. Where 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch had held that individuals who broke the law deserved to perish, 3 Baruch seems to hold that Jerusalem deserved its fate on the same grounds. All that is left in this apocalypse is the merit of individuals and the consolation of pondering the heavenly mysteries.

Conclusion

Of the late first-century apocalypses, 3 Baruch is most similar to those of the second century BCE in its focus on the heavenly mysteries, although I can see no direct dependence on the older apocalyptic texts. In all of these texts, however, the essential dynamic of apocalyptic eschatology remains. This world is not all there is. There is another hidden reality that can only be perceived by aid of angelic revelation. Life must be lived *sub specie aeternitatis*, or rather *sub specie judicii futuri*. Imminent expectation, or expectation focused on any particular time, is incidental to Jewish apocalypticism. What is essential is the belief that God is in control of history and of human destiny. Most apocalyptic utopias provide for the restoration of Israel as a world-dominating power, even if this lasts for only 400 years as in 4 Ezra rather than for a millennium, like the reign of Christ in Revelation. Over and above this,

however, all apocalyptic utopias envision a judgment of the dead. In most cases, this entails transformation to an angelic state; in some it implies bodily resurrection. But in all cases there is the belief that the world that now is does not represent ultimate reality. That reality is hidden. Hence the need for *apokalypsis*, or revelation.

Some thirty years ago, Martin Hengel wrote of 'higher wisdom through revelation' as a characteristic of the Hellenistic world.[55] The dialectic of hidden/revealed, or spiritual/physical, inevitably recalls the Platonic world-view. Jewish apocalypticism is not demonstrably indebted to Plato. It is not a philosophical enterprise, and its idiom is rooted in the mythological language of the ancient Near East. There is a certain affinity with Platonism none the less, albeit in a different key. No doubt this affinity should be attributed to the *zeitgeist* of the Hellenistic age, with its break-up of traditional cultures and the consequent desire for salvation in a world other than this one.[56]

The Messiah and the Millennium: The Roots of Two Jewish–Christian Symbols

Harold W. Attridge

The beginning of the second millennium of the common era has focused attention on phenomena associated with expectations of a radical alteration in political, social or existential conditions, the turn of a new age or epoch, when the vices of the past will be eliminated and a regime of peace and justice introduced. Such movements derive their label from the New Testament's graphic depiction of the eschaton, the Book of Revelation. Its concluding visions include the triumph of an anointed king or 'messiah', at whose coming the forces of evil will be bound and a kingdom of the righteous installed in authority for 1,000 years:

The Messiah: Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse! Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called 'The Word of God.' And the armies of heaven, wearing fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, 'King of kings and Lord of lords.' (Revelation 19: 11–16)[1]

The Millennium: Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would deceive the nations no more until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be let out for a little while. Then I saw thrones, and those seated

on them were given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. (Revelation 20: 4–6)

Whatever these late first century[2] visions may portend, and exegetes have struggled with them for 2,000 years,[3] the millennial kingdom envisions a vindication from persecution and righteous judgment under the sway of a beneficent King of Kings. Whatever else it may do, Revelation's image responds to a political and social situation, from the point of view of those who did not reap the benefits of an exploitative imperial system. Revelation's images, which offer hope in a situation conducive to despair, call on the imaginative tradition of Jewish literature, adapting ancient prophetic traditions to meet new needs. The combination of images of messiah and 1,000-year kingdom are fully appreciated only against the background of 200 years of Jewish resistance to external political power, and to the Christian adaptation of that resistance.

Repression and Resistance

The first stirrings of the tradition which culminates in the visions of John of Patmos surface in the fourth decade of the second century BCE during the attempt by the Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Greek ruler of the Seleucid monarchy of Syria, to interfere with traditional Jewish religious practice by installing a new ritual in the Temple of Jerusalem and by prohibiting the observance of traditional customs, such as circumcision. Modern scholars have long debated what caused the adoption of this apparently extreme policy. Factional infighting and debates among the aristocratic leadership of Judaea about the appropriate mode of integrating Israel within a wider world no doubt played a part. Antiochus may not have been trying so much to reform Israelite practice as to support 'progressives' within the local leadership who favoured a more cosmopolitan configuration of traditional forms.[4]

Whatever the cause of the persecution, pietistic and traditional segments of Israel resisted. Some of these mounted an armed defence of Torah and Temple. A priestly family from the village of Modiin assumed leadership of the revolt, and achieved some military successes. By December 164, Antiochus cut his losses and allowed the restoration of traditional Jewish worship and observance. Not long before he changed his policy, another Israelite, dismayed at the affront to Yahweh and his sanctuary, resisting with the quill rather than the sword, composed the Book of Daniel, the final work included in the Hebrew Bible.[5]

Developing traditional literary elements, Daniel tells of a Jewish seer

successful at a Gentile court,[6] despite his rigorous adherence to ancestral custom. This seer also dreamed symbolic dreams, not only for his contemporaries in the world of his story. Those visions and dreams also bore a message of hope for the people suffering from the persecution of Antiochus, symbolically portrayed as a 'little horn' broken on the head of a goat (Daniel 7: 9), or in more direct language, 'a king of bold countenance … skilled in intrigue' (7: 23), 'a contemptible person on whom royal majesty has not been conferred' (11: 21).[7] This figure will 'speak words against the Most High, shall wear out the holy ones of the Most High, and shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law' (7: 25), and will 'exalt himself and consider himself greater than any god, and shall speak horrendous things against the God of gods' (11: 36).

The visionary paints in the most sombre hues the portrait of the ungodly oppressor, but he is convinced that persecution is not the final word. At the centre of his visionary collection he limns a portrait of hope. At its heart is the image of the one in whom all sovereignty ultimately rests:

> As I watched, thrones were set in place and an Ancient One took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. (Daniel 7: 9–10)

The ancient one is not, however, alone. A younger figure comes before him to be installed as king:

> As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being [literally, 'one like a son of man'] coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed. (Daniel 7: 13–14)

The book does the reader the service of explaining the vision: 'The kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them' (Daniel 7: 27).

This explanation, though helpful, left considerable room for speculative interpretation. On the surface, the text promises liberation from oppression and political sovereignty of an expansive sort, to the 'people of the holy ones of the Most High', no doubt faithful Israelites, obedient to divine law and respectful of the traditional form of worship. But the verse contains more

than a simple prophecy of political import. The 'holy ones' who serve as a medium term between the Most High and his people are figures such as the great angel Michael, described in Daniel 12: 1–3 as, 'the great prince, the protector of your people'.[8] When he appears there will be a remarkable transformation:

> There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. (Daniel 12: 1–3)

Symbolic visions embedded in a revered text possess enormous generative power. Daniel's combination of the 'human being', apparently a member of the heavenly court, endowed with royal insignia, and a faithful people who share in universal dominion, enjoyed an afterlife that far transcended the circumstances of Seleucid oppression.

Hopes for Liberation and Divinely Sanctioned Leadership

The cessation of the threat to Temple and Torah did not signal the end of struggle and turmoil in Israel. The Hasmonean family continued its struggle, securing increasing degrees of autonomy as the power of the Seleucid monarchs waned.[9] Hasmonean propaganda suggested that under their leadership ancient promises were being realized,[10] and one of their number, John Hyrcanus (135–104 BCE), was reputed to have enjoyed the three 'anointed' offices of 'command of the nation, high priesthood, and prophecy'.[11] He would thus have been a 'messiah' in a very technical sense, but such status did not guarantee him or his line special reverence among his people, many of whom took with a pinch of salt the claims to good times that the dynasty issued.[12] Under Alexander Jannaeus (104–78 BCE), open hostility broke out between the ruling family and pietistic elements within Israel.[13]

Whatever the general sentiment of the Israelite population towards the ruling family, some elements within Israel came to view the Hasmoneans not as the solution to the nation's woes, but as a major part of the problem. Such circles nurtured hopes for deliverance, now from the domestic oppression of unrighteous rulers, and speculated on various forms of divinely authorized leadership that would bring liberation.

The most extensive record of such hopes and aspirations appears amid the Dead Sea Scrolls, the collection of largely Hebrew and Aramaic documents

found near the site of Qumran at the north–west corner of the Dead Sea.[14] This disparate collection clusters around a core of sectarian documents, written by a group usually identified with the Essenes known from first-century sources such as Philo and Josephus.[15] This group clearly was at odds with the high priestly leadership of the Hasmoneans[16] over issues such as the sacred calendar, and perhaps the legitimacy of the priestly line.[17] Whatever their complaints, the sect, alienated from the Temple now defiled by such unworthy priests, looked forward to a period of restoration under various 'anointed ones', individuals designated to play leadership roles in cultic and military spheres. Unlike the Hasmoneans, who celebrated the union of various messianic roles in a single individual, the sectarian scrolls celebrate a dyarchic messianism.[18] They look forward to a messiah of Israel,[19] who would share responsibilities but be distinct from a messiah of Aaron, the former tending to political and military affairs long associated with the house of David,[20] the latter to cultic matters.[21] The sectarians looked forward to a time of bliss overseen by these leaders and celebrated that time in their sacred meals.[22]

The authors of the Scrolls found support for their expectations in biblical prophecies of a 'Branch of David'.[23] Other sources for their speculation about their coming deliverance include the oracle of the biblical book of Numbers 24: 17 referring to a 'scepter and a star' that would arise from Jacob.[24] They also found pointers to future deliverers in mysterious biblical figures such as Melchizedek, mentioned only in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110. Speculating on such texts they imagined a figure like Michael in the Book of Daniel (12: 1), a priestly angel[25] who would provide atonement for his people, but who, realizing the hopes of the biblical jubilee year,[26] would also release them from the bonds of indebtedness and slavery.

Although members of the community hoped for divinely appointed leaders, and developed imaginative scenarios for a decisive conflict between the forces of good and evil,[27] much of their attention focused not on the coming tribulations and victory but on their contemporary participation in the heavenly world. They joined that world, and its hosts of angels in festive array, through their liturgical practice and prayer life. As they sang the songs of angels they experienced already that realm where God was sovereign.[28]

Imperial Power and National Hope

The autonomy gradually won by the Hasmoneans was short-lived. The collapse of the Seleucid state, which enabled the Israelite kingdom its brief moment in the political sun, left a power vacuum in the eastern Mediterranean soon filled from the west. The Roman republic had been engaged in the affairs of the Greek kingdoms of the region since the end of the third century

and had gradually assumed control over Macedonia, Achaea, and the Attalid kingdom of Pergamon.[29] The east responded at the beginning of the first century BCE in the person of Mithradates of Pontus. Rome's victory over his forces and the subsequent campaign against the pirates of the Cilician coast brought them to Israel's threshold. Pompey, in command in the east, invited by the squabbling heirs of the Hasmoneans, crossed that threshold in 63 BCE. Although Israelite leaders had dealt with Rome before,[30] now they did so not as distant 'allies' but as dependants.

Pompey's intervention made an impression on pious Israelites. His most egregious act was to visit the interior of the Temple, the realm reserved for the High Priest and only for the annual ritual of the Day of Atonement.[31] For a Gentile to enter that space was an insulting sacrilege, a sure sign of Israel's subjection, once again, to an inimical power.

One pious observer of the political scene composed a series of poems in the biblical mould, attributing them to Solomon. Like the psalmists of old, he 'cries to the Lord when severely troubled' (Psalms of Solomon; hereafter PsSol 1: 1),[32] and laments what has happened to Jerusalem:

> Arrogantly the sinner broke down the strong walls with a battering ram
> 　　and you did not interfere.
> Gentile foreigners went up to your place of sacrifice
> 　　they arrogantly trampled (it) with their sandals. (PsSol 2: 1–2)

Pompey emerges as a particularly arrogant oppressor, in the mould of Antiochus IV, but within fifteen years the arrogant one had been brought low in his struggle with Julius Caesar. His ultimate demise elicits this comment from the psalmist:

> He did not consider that he was a man.
> He said, 'I shall be lord of land and sea';
> 　　and he did not understand that it is God who is great,
> 　　powerful in his great strength.
> He is king over the heavens,
> 　　judging even kings and rulers. (PsSol 2: 28–31)

The fall of Pompey in 48 BCE gave the psalmist hope, but not in the contemporary political order. Rather, he looked forward to an anointed ruler in the Davidic line who would restore Israel materially and spiritually. In a vivid portrait of messianic hopes, he prays, for liberation from foreign oppression, a kind of 'ethnic cleansing', and a just political regime:

> See Lord, and raise up for them their king, the Son of David,
> 　　to rule over your servant Israel in the time known to you, O God.

Undergird him with the strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers,
  to purge Jerusalem from gentiles who trample her to destruction;
in wisdom and in righteousness to drive out the sinners from the inheritance
  to smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter's jar;
  to shatter all their substance with an iron rod;[33]
  to destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth;[34]
At his warning the nations will flee from his presence;
  and he will condemn sinners by the thoughts of their hearts.
He will gather a holy people
  whom he will lead in righteousness
and he will judge the tribes of the people
  that have been made holy by the Lord their God.
He will not tolerate unrighteousness (even) to pause among them,
  and any person who knows wickedness shall not live with them.
For he shall know them
  that they are all children of their God.
He will distribute them upon the land
  according to their tribes;
the alien and the foreigner will no longer live near them …
And he will have gentile nations serving him under his yoke,
  and he will glorify the Lord in (a place) prominent (above) the whole
  earth.
And he will purge Jerusalem
  (and make it) holy as it was even from the beginning,
(for) nations to come from the ends of the earth to see his glory,
  to bring as gifts her children who had been driven out
and to see the glory of the Lord
  with which God has glorified her.
An he will be a righteous king over them, taught by God.
There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days,
  for all shall be holy, and their king shall be the Lord Messiah.
  (PsSol 17: 21–32)

Imperial Collaborators and Continued Hope

The poetic vision of national renewal under the regime of a Davidic king was not fulfilled. The imperial political process instead delivered Israel into the hands of a very different monarch. The son of Antipas, the Idumean-born military commander of the high priest Hyrcanus, Herod came to prominence in the military service of his father when he conducted a brutal but successful campaign to rid Galilee of insurgents led by one Ezekias.[35] The death of

Antipas did not impede Herod's rise to power, nor did an invasion of Parthians. Perhaps perceiving Roman weakness after the assassination of Julius Caesar, these eastern enemies, like the Romans before them, used domestic rivalries among the last of the Hasmoneans as an excuse to intervene in Judaea. Herod, with the backing of his patron Mark Antony, was designated king of Israel by the Roman Senate and collaborated with Roman military forces to expel the Parthian invaders. That action secured, at least temporarily, his position in Jerusalem. The respite did not last long, since the outbreak of hostilities between Octavian and Mark Antony soon jeopardized Herod's position. After Antony's defeat at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE, Herod quickly mended fences with his new imperial overlord, and was confirmed in his position in Israel.[36] The alliance between Roman imperial power and the Herodian family was to continue in various forms through the end of the first century CE.

Herod administered his kingdom as a dutiful part of the Roman system with a firm but generous hand. Lavish building projects at home, particularly the reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem,[37] coupled with benefactions to other Greek cities,[38] enhanced Herod's prestige and established his reputation as a significant benefactor. They also imposed burdens on the local economy, which naturally fostered resentments. Heavy taxation did not contribute to Herod's popularity or improve the image of the Idumaean who had become Israel's monarch at Rome's decree.

Under Herod's regime, sentiments like those expressed in the Psalms of Solomon may have lurked beneath the surface, but the situation remained outwardly calm. Most of Herod's problems arose within his own family, several of whom were executed on suspicion of treason.[39] Some popular discontent emerged late in Herod's reign. At one point he imposed a fine on a group of Pharisees who refused to swear allegiance to him and to Rome.[40] Herod's sister-in-law paid their penalty, but the episode generated prophecies of Herod's downfall and his brother's rise to power. The king executed some of the leading prophets, including a eunuch, Bagoas, and a young lover of the king. Josephus reports that the prophecies encouraged the eunuch to think that he would be exalted to royal status and given renewed virility.[41] While the precise motives of resistance are unclear, the episode attests to the presence of oracular utterances promising radical change. The vision of the eunuch's own future that Jospehus attributes to him suggests a belief in an eschatological reversal of dramatic proportions, fitting for the dawn of a messianic age. While not all the unrest at the end of Herod's reign involved expectations of a messiah or a new political order,[42] some discontent certainly had such a focus.

Royal Pretenders

Practical resistance to the imperial regime and its local beneficiaries surfaced at Herod's death. In Galilee, Judas, son of Ezekias, the local chieftain once suppressed by Herod, staged a revolt, which Josephus ascribes to 'his craving for greater power and … his zealous pursuit of royal rank'.[43] In Jericho, Simon, a servant of Herod 'dared to don the diadem', and was acknowledged as king by his men before being suppressed by Herodian troops.[44] Whether these pretenders invoked ancient hopes of Davidic messianism is unclear. Another claimant, Athronges, like the mythical David, started life 'as an obscure shepherd'. Despite, or perhaps because of, such origins he 'aspired to kingship', with four brothers to aid him, like the Maccabean rebels of the second century BCE.[45] Their armed resistance to Herod and the Romans continued 'for a long time', anticipating the kind of guerrilla warfare that would vex Rome in the same area during the Bar-Cochba revolt just over 130 years later.

Such revolts against Herod's authority and, implicitly at least, against the power that stood behind him met with quick and brutal suppression. Whether the rebels hoped for the kind of dramatic transformation that the Book of Daniel or the Psalms of Solomon predicted, at least in the case of Athronges, they seem to have invoked the symbols of David, the archetypal anointed king.

After Herod's death in 4 BCE, Rome divided his kingdom into three segments, each governed by one of his sons. The central portion, Judaea, fell to Archelaus, whose unsuccessful tenure lasted a mere ten years. After his deposition, Rome administered the province through equestrian prefects. In order to facilitate taxation, the Romans conducted a census, under the supervision of the legate of Syria, Quirinius. This census, notoriously misdated in the Gospel of Luke,[46] was the occasion of further disturbances, led by one Judas, either from Galilee[47] or Gamala in the Gaulan.[48] Josephus credits him with the foundation of a 'fourth philosophy', similar to that of the Pharisees, but marked by 'an invincible passion for liberty'.[49] The connections between this group and later revolutionary movements have been the subject of considerable scholarly discussion.[50] The description by Josephus leaves much to conjecture about the motives and self-understanding of the movement and its leader, but it is likely that some of the same ideals motivated them as operated in some of the revolts at the end of Herod's reign.

For several decades after the deposition of Archelaus, the situation in Herod's former kingdom remained relatively quiet. While Roman prefects tended Judaea, Herod Antipas ruled Galilee until 39 CE,[51] his brother Philip the northern Transjordan region and southern Lebanon until 34 CE.[52] Under their administrations, the overall situation in Palestine remained uneasily calm.[53]

Jesus of Nazareth

During this period, a prophetic preacher from Galilee appeared on the scene, destined to have a major impact on subsequent religious history. The degree to which he appropriated, and possibly transformed, the expectations manifest in Daniel and the Psalms of Solomon, expectations at work in the texts from Qumran and apparently inspiring various rebels and revolutionaries, has been a matter of considerable scholarly debate.[54] Part of the debate results from the theological predilections of interpreters, who have ever remade Jesus in their own image.[55] Part rests on the ambiguity of the sources themselves, which maintain distinct viewpoints.

The whole debate cannot be reviewed here, yet some treatment of Jesus is clearly necessary in order to understand the roots of the images that are the subject of this essay. And while some details are unclear, certain major facts are beyond cavil.

1. Jesus made use of the image of the 'Kingdom' or 'Reign' of God as an important part of what he taught. This image obviously used a political category related to the prophecies of Daniel and the programme of the Psalms of Solomon. The image, however, had broader and deeper roots in Israel's literature. It was redolent of the psalms and their portrait of God, Israel's true king,[56] the king over all kings,[57] and ruler of all nature,[58] who governs with righteousness,[59] whose domain was above all the hearts and minds of his people.[60] Jesus spoke of the coming of this reign of God,[61] but called people to be aware of it in their midst,[62] and to act as if it really governed their lives.[63] The royal power of which he was the herald stood in opposition to the empire that dominated Israel. Power in God's realm came not from a sword, but from unexpected sources, an embrace of powerlessness and a refusal to act as normal retainers do.[64] As the empire had a father who imposed his will by force of arms, so too did the reign of God, which demanded non-retaliation.[65] Yet Jesus is also remembered to have predicted the coming of God in power and might.[66] Much of the contemporary debate about his teaching revolves around the authenticity of those predictions.

2. Perhaps because of his use of the pregnant metaphor of God's Kingdom or Reign, Jesus was perceived by the authorities to be a political threat, another Judas, or Simon or Athronges. His action in the Temple of Jerusalem, 'driving out' the money changers and overturning their tables, constituted at least a prophetic sign on the Temple and its administrators that could be construed as a symbolic, yet revolutionary threat.[67] The preacher of the Kingdom was thus crucified as 'King of the Jews'.[68]

3. However he was perceived by the authorities, the claims that Jesus made for himself remain obscure. On this point, the Gospels offer a notoriously

divided witness. At one end stands Mark suggesting that Jesus hinted at his real identity as 'Son of God', and hence royal messiah,[69] to those whom he healed and to his disciples, but enjoined them to keep it secret.[70] At the other extreme the Fourth Gospel has Jesus boldly proclaim his divine mission and his equality with God.[71] A frequent focus of the debate about Jesus' messianic claims is the expression that came to prominence in the visions of Daniel, the Son of Man. The oddity of the phrase strongly suggests that Jesus indeed used it,[72] but its sense is unclear. Some attestations clearly evoke Daniel;[73] others seem to rely on the etymological meaning of the phrase to refer to 'human beings' generally.[74] Did he, as a literal reading of Mark 14: 62 would suggest, predict that he or perhaps another agent of God would come to bring judgment and salvation?[75] Or did he, as at Mark 2: 10, use the expression to refer to himself in a perhaps ironic, self-effacing way, an expression only associated with Daniel by his followers?[76] While Jesus probably did use the phrase, and with it alluded to Daniel, his claims to be an or the 'anointed one' of God remain oblique and frequently ironic.

4. Some disciples of Jesus experienced him after his death newly and powerfully alive in their midst. Their experiences, whether visions, or inspired interpretations of scripture, convinced them that Jesus was, among other things, the Son of Man, the figure portrayed in Daniel as the recipient of sovereignty from God, now exalted to heavenly status,[77] the anointed one who would return to usher in an era of peace and justice.[78]

The reflections on the significance of Jesus contained in the Gospels and in the letters of Paul manifest diverse Christian assessments of the prophetic teacher from Galilee,[79] but a central element in all is the proclamation of the present and future reign of God, and the role in that kingdom of God's anointed one.

Messianism and the Great Revolt

As the Christian movement emerged, the political situation began to change. The emperor Claudius briefly reunited Herod's old realm in the hands of Herod's grandson, Agrippa I, who had already received the tetrarchy of Philip from the emperor Gaius in 37[80] and Galilee, vacated by the exiled Herod Antipas, in 39.[81] Claudius added the heartland, Judaea, in 41.[82] Agrippa, who merited that benefaction by long-standing association with the Julio-Claudian family and particularly by his role in the accession of Claudius,[83] did not live long to enjoy it, dying suddenly in 44 CE.

After Agrippa's untimely death, Rome assumed direct control of all of Palestine. In little more than twenty years, the increasingly restive local population, whose animosities were exacerbated by heavy-handed adminis-

trators, rose in massive revolt against the imperial system and the procurators who were now its local ministers.[84]

   After an initial defeat,[85] the Romans launched a major military campaign to restore order. The assassination of Nero in June of 68 brought a halt to military operations while leading generals assessed their situation. The commander of Roman forces in the east, Vespasian, decided that he was as fit to rule as any of the other generals who had put themselves forward for the task. He threw his helmet in the ring and left the suppression of the Jewish revolt to his son Titus. A swift series of campaigns brought Vespasian to Rome as its new master. Meanwhile, his son, Titus, commanding the Roman forces in Palestine, set about to complete the task.

   The delay caused by Roman political developments, following the rebels' initial success against imperial forces, heightened expectations of final success.[86] Military opportunity, coupled with those heightened expectations, increased expectations that this was the confrontation between the forces of good and evil predicted by prophets and visionaries. Not all the leaders of the various factions who joined the revolt presented themselves as messiahs, but some did. Menachem, son of Judas the Galilean who had led a revolt after the deposition of Archelaus, played a leading role in the early stages of the rebellion[87] and apparently tried to assume kingly status. Arrayed in royal robes he visited the Temple, but was confronted by another revolutionary faction under Eleazar, a member of the priestly aristocracy, and was slain.[88] Two other leaders of the revolt, John of Gischala, and Simon son of Gioras from Gerasa, survived the siege and fall of Jerusalem and were brought to Rome as part of the triumph of Titus, John sentenced to lifelong imprisonment and Simon to be executed as the culmination of the triumph.[89] Josephus accused both of acting in a despotic fashion,[90] but whether they made any claims to messianic or royal status is unclear.

   Following the revolt, the Romans tightened control over the province, and imposed on all Jews throughout the empire a 2-drachma tax, the amount which they had been contributing annually to the welfare of the Temple.[91] Some lands were confiscated and sold, and Roman veterans settled on them.[92] The locus of Torah-observant Judaism shifted to towns and villages outside Jerusalem, to Jamnia (Yavneh). Some of the supporters of the revolt who survived the catastrophe in the land of Israel moved to other provinces, such as Egypt and Cyrene, where they apparently fomented continuing discontent with the imperial system.

Messiah and Millennium in Revelation

The Book of Revelation alludes to the siege of Jerusalem[93] and perhaps its fall.[94] The book, like the Jewish revolutionaries of 66–70, also saw Rome as the arch-enemy, the idolatrous incarnation of primordial evil itself.[95] Its author, who disputed with others the right to be called a Jew,[96] thus knew what hopes for political independence could produce, but it took a polemical stance towards the contemporary imperial power. Yet for Revelation Jesus had already come as the messiah. He was now enthroned in heaven as the 'Son of Man',[97] and was destined to return as the agent of God's judgment and rule. The Book as a whole offers a vision celebrating the victory which that messiah has already won over the forces of evil at every level.

As a result, the images of messiah and his kingdom sometimes have a paradoxical quality. The one who rides triumphant on the white horse, the 'lion of Judah' (Revelation 5: 5), is also a lamb who has been slain (5: 6). Those who participate in the administration of his kingdom are disembodied souls of people who have been beheaded (20: 4). The kingdom that they rule has a new Jerusalem as its capital, but a Jerusalem founded on the names of the apostles of Jesus (21: 14).

While any simple reading of the complex and allusive symbolism of Revelation is bound to be a distortion, the book is as much a celebration, against all appearances, of the contemporary victory of the followers of Jesus over the social and political forces that persecuted them. For them, the most important coming of their messiah is the one that has already happened, in which Satan, while not finally vanquished, was overthrown (Revelation 12: 10–12) and in which God already established a kingdom (11: 15–18) consisting of priests who worship him aright (1: 6; 5: 10). This vision of divine sovereignty thus has something in common with the structure of eschatological belief at Qumran, which also celebrated the participation by the sectarian community in a heavenly reality that anticipated the consummation of God's final victory over forces of evil.

Alternatives to the Vision of Revelation

The appropriation and development of the images of the messiah and his kingdom in the Book of Revelation offer one of several options pursued by heirs of the traditional messianism. At roughly the same time another seer steeped in Jewish tradition reacted to the disastrous events of 70 CE and composed a meditative lament in the person of the ancient scribe Ezra. This lengthy apocalypse deals in depth with the question of theodicy posed by the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 70 CE, the same situation that

confronted the Book of Revelation. While 4 Ezra deems the ways of God inscrutable, it holds out hopes that justice will eventually be vindicated. Part of its message consists of an eschatological scenario, very similar in structure to that offered by John of Patmos:

> For behold, the time will come, when the signs which I have foretold to you will come to pass; the city which now is not seen shall appear, and the land which now is hidden shall be disclosed. And everyone who has been delivered from the evils that I have foretold shall see my wonders. For my son the Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years. And after these years my son the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath. And the world shall be turned back to primeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginnings; so that no one shall be left. And after seven days the world, which is not yet awake, shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish. And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them. And the Most High shall be revealed upon the seat of judgment, and compassion shall pass away, and patience shall be withdrawn, but judgment alone shall remain, truth shall stand, and faithfulness shall grow strong. And recompense shall follow. (4 Ezra 7: 26–35)[98]

In the hands of this visionary, the symbols of anointed king and his realm still have force, but they are pushed to a distant eschatological future, a 400-year period before a final cosmic transformation.

Further Militant Messiahs

While some seers pushed the expectations of a messiah and a new political arrangement for the righteous into the mythical future, others still saw them as real possibilities in their own lifetimes, and sought to realize them through military action. Some forty-five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, the seeds sown by the scattered rebels of the first revolt bore fruit in a violent upheaval, this time in North Africa. We are less well informed about this revolt than about the first or second revolt in the land of Israel. From what we can glean from scattered later sources, it is clear that the uprising in Egypt and Cyrene was violent and ultimately devastating to the Jewish population.[99]

The factors that motivated the revolt remain unclear, but it is likely that both messianic expectations and hopes like those of the Psalms of Solomon nourished and sustained the revolt.[100] Ambiguous evidence comes from later reports, one by the third-century Roman historian Cassius Dio, who gives a succinct account of the revolt:

> Meanwhile the Jews in the region of Cyrene had put a certain Andreas at their head, and were destroying both the Romans and the Greeks. They would eat the flesh of their victims, make belts for themselves of their entrails, anoint themselves with their blood and wear their skins for clothing; many they sawed in two, from the head downwards; others they gave to wild beasts, and still others they forced to fight as gladiators … In Egypt, too, they perpetrated many similar outrages, and in Cyprus, under the leadership of a certain Artemion.[101]

If even a portion of the grisly war stories are true, it is clear that deep-seated animosities, rivalling those of Bosnia and Kosovo in the late twentieth century, fuelled this ethnic strife. A second report appears in the fourth-century church historian Eusebius:

> The Jews of Cyrene continued to plunder the country of Egypt and to ravage the districts in it under their leader Lucuas. The emperor sent against them Marcus Turbo with land and sea forces including cavalry. He waged war vigorously against them in many battles for a considerable time and killed many thousands of Jews, not only those of Cyrene, but also those of Egypt who had rallied to Lucuas, their king. The emperor suspected that the Jews in Mesopotamia would also attack the inhabitants and ordered Lusius Quietus to clean them out of the province.[102]

The Cyrenean leader, whether named Andreas or Lucuas, seems to have had some messianic pretensions, but the evidence is too slender to be certain. The results of the brutal revolt were equally brutal and the attempt of the Cyrenean Jews to rid themselves of Gentile oppression had the opposite effect.

While the ideology espoused by the Jewish revolutionaries against Rome under Trajan is obscure, there is no doubt about the messianic dimensions of the final major Jewish revolt against Rome in antiquity. Anti-imperial sentiments continued to fester in Palestine after the destruction of Jerusalem. These finally came to the surface in the reign of Hadrian in a massive guerrilla campaign that lasted from 132 to 135 CE in Judaea under the leadership of Simon Bar-Cosiba, known to his supporters as Bar-Cochba ('Son of a Star') and to the later rabbis as Bar-Koziba ('Son of Lie').[103]

Sources for the revolt variously describe the factors that led to its outbreak. Cassius Dio attributes it to Hadrian's plan to build a new Greco-Roman city, Aelia, on the site of Jerusalem, complete with a pagan temple.[104] A prohibition of circumcision, which was certainly enforced on the Jews after the war, may also have played a part.[105] Eusebius describes the leader: 'The Jews were at that time led by a certain Bar Chochebas, which means "star," a man who was murderous and a bandit, but relied on his name, as if dealing with slaves, and claimed to be a luminary who had come down to them from heaven and was magically enlightening those who were in misery.'[106]

Although Eusebius is hardly a sympathetic source, his brief description probably reveals something of the messianic programme of the revolt's leader. Like the Qumran sectarians,[107] he apparently appealed to Numbers 24: 17, making a play on his personal name, attested in documentary papyri. The claim made by that play was accepted by some of the leading rabbis of the time, including Rabbi Akiba:

> R. Simeon ben Yahai said, R. Akiba my teacher used to explain the passage, 'A star shall go forth from Jacob' thus. Koziba (read, Kokhba) goes forth from Jacob. Again, when R. Akiba saw Bar Koziba (Kokhba), he cried out, 'This is King Messiah.' Thereupon R. Yohanan b. Torta said to him: 'Akiba, grass will grow out your cheek-bones and the Son of David will still not have come.'[108]

Ben Torta was of course right, and rabbinic editors in sympathy with his position transmitted this story. Other elements in Eusebius's description of this messiah recall some claims made for Jesus by his followers.[109] Whether Bar-Cochba's claims deliberately rivalled those of the Christians,[110] they drew on similar sources.

The messianic revolt against Hadrian's Rome also involved, if not a millennium, then at least a new age of liberty for Israel. Coins minted by the revolutionaries display an image of a star over the Temple, which they hoped to restore. Their legal documents, preserved in Judaean caves, proclaimed a new era, dating from 'the liberation of Israel'.[111]

Despite their hopes and a valiant struggle against Rome, the last active messiah of antiquity and the kingdom that he inaugurated ended in a blood-bath at a citadel Beththera, modern Bettir, 10 km south-west of Jerusalem.

Aftermath

The suppression of the Bar-Cochba revolt marked at least the temporary end of militant messianism. Jewish rabbis turned towards the timeless structures of the Torah, although their liturgies continued to pray for the restoration of Jerusalem and the coming of the messiah. Christian leaders such as Eusebius greeted the acceptance of the Church by the empire as, in effect, the inauguration of a millennial age. At the same time they put off to the distant future their hopes for Jesus' return. In neither tradition, however, did hopes for a new age and its anointed leader totally evaporate, and both intertwined symbols of liberation and renewal have exercised their fascination throughout Western history by groups yearning for release from empires perceived to be evil.

Messianism, Millennialism and Revolution in Early Islamic History

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Definitions

Before turning to Islamic history, three related concepts can be distinguished and briefly defined: apocalypticism, messianism and millennialism. Apocalypticism, or the apocalyptic worldview, denotes the imminent expectation of the total transformation of the world. Messianism can be defined as the expectation of the appearance of a divine saviour. Millennialism will be used in the literal sense of the expectation of a radical break with the present at the end of a 1,000-year age and, by extension, of the calculation of the time of the end and related numerological speculations. These three concepts can be meaningfully applied to Islamic history where they have close equivalents and analogues.

In the preface to *Ancient Judaism*, Max Weber gave the following as the foremost reason for the world-historical significance of its subject:

> For the Jew the religious promise was the very opposite [of that of Hinduism]. The social order of the world was conceived to have been turned into the opposite of that promised for the future, but in the future it was to be overturned so that Jewry would be once again dominant … The whole attitude toward life of ancient Jewry was determined by this conception of a future God-guided political and social revolution.[1]

Yet there is no word on the emergence of apocalypticism in the Hellenistic era in the admittedly incomplete manuscript Weber left behind. Peter Berger considers the Christian theodicy of the crucifixion of the Son of God as the cause of the other-worldly transposition of this revolution.[2] He further states with some justice that, after the collapse of the Christian theodicy of suffering, the deeply rooted messianic vision of ancient Judaism ushered in the era of modern revolution.

What Weber had in mind doubtless included Isaiah's vision of the redemption and restoration of Israel. That vision of restoration, however, lacked the apocalyptic dimension as we have defined it in that it did not amount to a new creation. The more radically transcendent promised order appears later in the form of the apocalyptic idea of the total transformation of the world. To be more precise, the prototype of the 'conception of a future God-guided political and social revolution' is the apocalyptic vision of the fall of the last empire and the coming of God's as it developed in the Hellenistic era and was recorded at the time of the Maccabean revolt in the mid-second century BCE.

The apocalyptic perspective in ancient Judaism is itself not the product of any ancient revolution. More specifically, the apocalypticism of the Book of Daniel and the contemporary pseudepigrapha cannot be said to have been caused by any short-term political crisis and/or breakdown in the authority structure, such as the one that demonstrably precipitated the Maccabean revolt.[3] It is now generally agreed that the earliest apocalyptic texts, especially early parts of the Book of Enoch, predate the mid-second-century BCE Maccabean revolt considerably.[4] At least some of the Zoroastrian apocalyptic ideas are older still. Let me mention the cosmological notion of the glorious renewal of the world (*frasho-kereti*) at the end of time, the view of world history as the succession in world domination of the four empires in the *Bahman Yasht*, and the millennial division of time into twelve periods of 1,000 years, each under the domination of an astral divinity of a sign of the Zodiac. These Persian notions spread widely in the Hellenistic era and gave rise to a particular oracular form of resistance to Hellenistic domination that was absorbed into intertestamental apocalypticism.[5] The Maccabean revolt was the decisive historical matrix for the birth of the apocalyptic view of politics and of political messianism, which were, interestingly, developed by the losing partners in the revolutionary coalition, the Essenes, who withdrew as 'the exiles of the desert' to the Qumran settlement near the Dead Sea.[6] The Qumran settlement was destroyed by the Roman army of Vespasian some two centuries later, but the messianism the sect had sustained in institutionalized form survived, and was passed on to Christianity, Rabbinical Judaism and Islam. The broader apocalyptic vision was carried by other sectarian groups, notably the Enochic circles and the Christians. Many apocalyptic notions spread and coalesced with messianism while undergoing extensions and elaborations. The eschatological prophet, for example, reappears in the apocalyptic reconstruction of Elijah as the returning prophet of the end of time. The apocalyptic perspective of the Book of Daniel, which included the idea of the successive world domination of the four empires and the fall of the last empire, was especially privileged as the Maccabean winners of the revolutionary power struggle had appropriated it and assured its

inclusion in the Old Testament canon. Apocalyptic worldview and political messianism thus became an autonomous cultural form available for adaptation by future generations of millenarians and revolutionaries in the late antiquities.

In short, the apocalyptic worldview was historically prior to and presumed by political messianism. Once the apocalyptic perspective is culturally available, one would expect it to be drawn upon by revolutionaries; and that was certainly done by various coalition partners in the Maccabean revolt. This resort to the apocalyptic in revolutionary situations, however, is not inevitable.[7] The apocalyptic worldview is compatible with revolutionary as well as quietistic political attitudes, with militancy as well as pacifism. Political messianism, on the other hand, inevitably motivates militant activism. The apocalyptic view of politics is particularly appropriate for the moment of revolutionary liminality, and can supply a powerful stimulus to what has been called 'absolute politics', when no boundaries are set to the political will and every aspect of the social order is seen as transformable by political action.[8] The apocalyptic vision is a powerful means for transcendentalizing the normative order. Order is no longer identified with cosmos and nomos but requires a radical break with both; it therefore radically transcends the existing reality which is destined for cataclysmic destruction. By holding up the vision of the complete social and political transformation at an imminent point in history, political messianism generates a powerful motivation for absolute political action aiming at the destruction and reconstruction of the political order. Only political messianism, established as a legitimate cultural form, can be regarded as an indispensable prerequisite for what Weber called the 'conception of a future God-guided political and social revolution'.

Muhammad and the Rise of Islam

The rise of Muhammad in Arabia, whatever else it may have been, was a revolution by any reasonable definition of the term. It was sustained by a strong apocalyptic vision, and it claimed to be the realization of messianism. Millennialism, however, was not present at its birth; the closest parallel we find to it in early Islam is the apocalyptic notion of the centennium.

The influence of the Book of Daniel on the origins of Islam has generally been overlooked. This may be due to the surprising fact that the Qur'an does not mention Daniel. Nevertheless, the Qur'an itself supplies unmistakable evidence of the influence of the Book of Daniel. The reference to Abraham as the friend of God (Daniel 3: 35) is carried over to the Qur'an (4: 124). Gabriel and Michael, the two archangels who are introduced to the Hebrew Bible in the Book of Daniel, are both mentioned in the Qur'an.[9] In fact, Gabriel's role in hierophany and audition (Daniel 10: 4–11.1) becomes central

in Islam, and the Islamic tradition sees Gabriel not only as the angel of revelation but also as Muhammad's frequent counsellor.[10] Last but not least, the Danielic notion of setting the seal on prophecy (Daniel 9: 24), as we shall see, crucially influenced Muhammad's idea of final prophecy.

It is interesting to note that the legend of Daniel is traceable[11] to 'Abd Allah b. Salam (d. 663), the learned rabbi who accepted Muhammad as the prophet of the end of time, the gentile 'brother of Moses'.[12] The earliest historical reference to Daniel occurs in the account of the conquest of Susa (Shush) in 638, six years after Muhammad's death. After entering Susa in a suitably apocalyptic fashion to be described presently, the conquering Muslims were then shown the remains of Daniel and found a seal/signet ring depicting a man between two lions. The seal was first taken but was returned to the body by 'Umar's order. The commander of the Muslim forces 'had the body wrapped in shrouds and the Muslims buried it'.[13] According to a more interesting tradition, upon the conquest of Shushtar (Tustar), where the presumed tomb of Daniel is located, the Muslims found a book in the treasury of the Persian commander, Hurmuzun, above the head of a corpse identified as Daniel. 'They carried the book to 'Umar who was the first Arab to read it and sent it to Ka'b who copied it in Arabic. In it was what will occur of civil disorders (*fitan*).'[14]

With the civil wars of 656–61, 683–92 and 744–50, the term *fitan* was soon to become synonymous with *malahim* – apocalyptic woes and tribulations on which a book is attributed to Daniel. These civil wars (*fitan*) of classical Islam are the easily recognizable context of a large number of apocalyptic traditions which usually take the form of '*ex eventu* prophecies'. Furthermore, the Muslim–Byzantine wars constituted the generative historical matrix of a considerable number of apocalyptic traditions on the tribulations of the end of time.[15] As the events of these wars underwent apocalyptic transformation and elaboration, however, the term *fitna* itself acquired the sense of pre-messianic tribulation and was included among the signs of the Hour. I suspect this tradition anachronistically renders *malahim* as *fitan*. If so, its referent might be the apocalyptic battles of the Kings of the South and the North, and especially the battles of the end of time against earthly kings in which the archangels Gabriel and Michael lead the army of angels against earthly kings (Daniel 10: 13–12: 1). In any case, the use of the term *malhama* for the woes and tribulations of the end of time is striking. Its derivation from the Hebrew cognate *milhama* (war) clearly points to the influence of the apocalyptic War Rules in the Dead Sea Scrolls and thus to the bearers of the Qumran apocalyptic tradition who also carried the Danielic one.[16] Muslims later came to think Daniel's book also contained the eternal wisdom the father of mankind, Adam, had hidden in the treasure-cave mentioned in the Syriac texts soon to be translated into Arabic. [17]

The influence of the Book of Daniel is especially marked in the idea of Muhammad as the Seal of the Prophets. There can be little doubt that the notion of Seal (*khatam*) is apocalyptic. The Hebrew cognate *khotam* is the messianic signet-ring of Haggai 2: 23, where Yahweh declares to Zerubbabel: 'I shall take you … and make you like a signet-ring; for I have chosen you.' The apocalyptic connotation of the term is made explicit, and is, furthermore, applied to prophecy by Daniel who speaks of the time for setting the seal on prophecy (Daniel 9: 24) and is told by Gabriel to 'keep the book sealed until the end of time' (Daniel 12: 1). The basic tenet of primitive Islam, according to Casanova, was that 'the time announced by Daniel and Jesus had come. Muhammad was the last prophet chosen by God to preside, at the end of time … over the universal resurrection and Last Judgement.' His argument for equating the expression 'Seal of the Prophets' (*khatam al-nabiyin*) with 'the prophet/messenger of the end of time' (*nabi/rasul akhir al-zaman*) is persuasive.[18] According to one well-known tradition, the finality of Muham-mad's prophecy itself is apocalyptic: 'I am Muhammad, and I am Ahmad and I am the resurrector – the people are resurrected upon my steps – and I am the final one – there is no prophet after me.'[19] Even more decisive is the epithet 'Prophet/Messenger of the *malhama*' attested for Muhammad in several early traditions.[20]

Muhammad, the prophet of the end of time, did begin the conquest of Arabia as a true 'Messenger of the *malhama*'; his apocalyptic battle was none other than the battle of Badr in 624, when God sent down 3,000 angels to fight alongside his army (Q. [Qur'an] 3: 123–5). The Muslim tradition follows Daniel in having Gabriel and Michael each lead 1,000 angels to the right and the left of Muhammad (and archangel Israfil is added at the head of another 1,000 to reach the number given in the Qur'an)[21] and considers the battle of Badr as 'the day of redemption/deliverance (*furqan*)' mentioned in Q. 8: 41 as a parallel to Exodus 14: 13.[22]

The Book of Daniel was influential in the Judaeo-Christian apocalyptic lore, as well as the Gnostic-Mandaean literature.[23] More immediately, the Danielic apocalyptic notions were most probably introduced in Arabia by the anti-Rabbinic Jewish, Jewish Christian and Jewish Manichaean sects.[24] These sectarian groups have been identified as the bearers of the Qumran apocalyptic tradition.[25] This identification has recently been reinforced through the con-nection established between the Zadokite (Sadducee) leadership and legal rite of the Qumran community and the Sadducee designation and legal rite of the medieval Karaites.[26] Through the Karaite connection, the anti-Rabbinic Jews, such as those of the Yemen, who 'have the knowledge' and accepted Muhammad as the expected gentile prophet,[27] saying 'the promise of our Lord is indeed fulfilled' (Q. 17: 108), can now be confirmed as the heirs to

the Essene apocalyptic tradition. In what follows I will point to the Essene influence on apocalyptic elements in the Qur'an. The connection between the Qumran sectarian teachings and the origins of Islam is, however, not confined to apocalypticism. Philonenko[28] has persuasively argued that the only express citation of the Psalms (indeed, of the Old Testament) in the Qur'an (Psalm 37: 29 cited in Q. 21: 105 as 'The earth shall be the inheritance of My righteous servants')[29] depends on the Essene texts, as does the Qur'anic image of David more generally. Furthermore, the evidence for the Essene connection is not solely textual; there are also important historical indications. According to the biography of the Prophet, his confirmation as the gentile prophet (*al-nabi al-ummi*) by the Judaizing cousin of his wife was critical in boosting his resolve at the outset of his mission.[30] The learned Ka'b al-Ahbir (d. 654), to whom the vast majority of the early Muslim apocalyptic traditions are traced, belonged to one such anti-Rabbinic Jewish group in the Yemen whose priests bore the title of *bahr* (Hebrew, *haber*).[31]

A rare apocalyptic figure named in the Qur'an is Idris. He is mentioned twice among the prophets (Q. 19: 57, 21: 85),[32] and is an apocalyptic figure: 'He was a true man (*siddiq*), a Prophet; we raised him to a high place' (Q. 19: 57). Idris is commonly identified in Sunni tradition with Enoch. He is, however, more likely a composite figure that combines Enoch (via Manichaeanism) with the Zadokite Doresh ha-Torah (Interpreter of the Law) of the Essenes. The latter connection is strongly suggested by the 'Zadokite' epithet, *siddiq*, and by root *drs[h]* common to Idris and Doresh.

Ezra is mentioned once in the Qur'an in the diminutive form of 'Uzayr. By the time of 4 Ezra and in the subsequent literature, Ezra the scribe had become Ezra the prophet.[33] Ezra was identified with Enoch and appears as the key figure in the mystical speculations of the Jewish communities of Arabia.[34] At the beginning of 4 Ezra, which circulated not only in Syriac but also in Arabic, Ezra is clearly presented as a second Moses[35] and it is as the messianic 'prophet like Moses' that he enters into Islam. The assertion in the Qur'an (9: 30) that 'the Jews say 'Uzayr is the son of God as the Christians say the Messiah is the son of God' should be understood in this light. According to Ibn Hazm,[36] the Jews referred to in this verse were the Sadducees of the Yemen who, as we have seen, were the bearers of the Essene apocalyptic tradition. Furthermore, the unnamed person, whom God caused to die on the outskirts of the ruined city but brought back to life a hundred years later to witness the resurrection of his donkey (Q. 2: 261), was commonly identified as Ezra[37] even though Jeremiah was sometimes preferred and the ruined city was taken to mean Jerusalem.[38] This verse, as we shall see, formed the basis for the apocalyptic conception of the centennium in early Islam.

The tradition that secrets had been written in a book and kept secret also

begins with 4 Ezra.[39] In the later Judaeo-Christian lore, Ezra appears as the revealer of magico-astrological secrets.[40] Muslim tradition combined this with the legend of the book thrown to the sea by Daniel.[41]

Messianism entered Islam through Christianity. The Paraclete is referred to in the Verse 61: 6 of the Qur'an, where Jesus son of Mary presents himself to the children of Israel as the messenger of God who confirms the Torah and is the 'bearer of good tidings of a messenger who shall come after me and whose name shall be Ahmad (*ismuhu ahmadu*)'. W. Montgomery Watt has argued persuasively for an adjectival reading of the term *ahmad*.[42] Given one possible meaning of the term as 'greater in praising', the Qur'anic statement is a reasonable paraphrase of the promise of the coming of the Paraclete in John 16: 13–14: 'when the Spirit of truth comes … he will not be speaking of his own accord but will only say what he has been told; and he will reveal to you the things to come. He will glorify me.' Quite apart from the identity of the terms for 'praising' and 'glorifying' the Lord, this passage is substantively important because it corresponds exactly to the Qur'anic concept of the revelation as the unaltered recitation, by the Prophet, of the divine words brought down by Gabriel (Q. 75: 16–19) who is indeed the [holy/trustworthy] Spirit (*ruh*) (Q. 5: 110[109], 16: 102[104], 26: 193). The Qur'an (Recitation) is the latest revealed portion of the heavenly book, the Preserved Tablet (*lawh mahfaz*) (Q. 85: 22). The influence of the Gospel of John may have been reinforced through Manichaeism.[43] Indeed, Biruni's statement is a striking presentation of the great Babylonian prophet, Mani (d. 277) as the forerunner of Muhammad: 'In his gospel … he says that he is the Paraclete announced by the Messiah, and that he is the seal of the prophets (*i.e.* the last of them).'[44]

The Qur'an also adopted the apocalyptic belief in the second coming of Christ. Jesus 'is the sign of the Hour' (Q. 43: 61). Jesus will return to Jerusalem and kill the Antichrist. This assures Jerusalem a central place in the topography of the Islamic apocalyptic tradition. The Sea of Tiberias, on whose shores Jesus had revealed himself to the disciples after crucifixion (John 21), also figures in the Islamic apocalyptic topography. In one interesting set of traditions, Gog and Magog first appear there and drink its water dry.[45]

There can be no doubt that Muhammad himself set out to contain messianic expectations *pari passu* his political success in the unification of Arabia. The very term 'Seal of the Prophets' occurs in a mundane, indeed defensive context. The final de-apocalypticization of political messianism and its historicization into triumphal 'realized Messianism' is documented in the remarkably coherent Victory Chapter of the Qur'an that celebrates the final conquest of Mecca in 630. The angelic army of the apocalyptic first battle of Badr is transformed into the divine succour in the form of Shechina descending upon the warriors of faith whose heart God knows (Q. 46: 19; 26). Those who obey God and

his Messenger will enter 'the garden underneath which rivers flow' (Q. 46: 17). Whereas Jesus, as we have seen, had been the 'bearer of the good tiding' of the coming of the Paraclete/Ahmad, Muhammad is 'but the witness, the bearer of the good tiding (*mubashshir*) and the warner' (Q. 46: 8).

Muhammad's closure of the apocalyptic perspective and containment of messianic expectation was inconclusive, however. With the Messiah being identified with the historic Jesus and Islam's self-image as 'realized Messianism', there remained a void for a distinctively Islamic saviour figure at the end of time. Within half a century of Muhammad's death, the position was filled by the figures of the Qa'im and the Mahdi. (Although the saviour figure of the Islamic political Messianism was variously conceived as the Qa'im and/or the Mahdi, as the latter term is more general and better known, I will refer to it as Mahdism.) Later commentators accordingly modified the picture of the Second Coming to accommodate the celebration of Islam. After slaying the Antichrist (*dajjal*), Jesus kills the swine and breaks the crosses, destroys churches and synagogues, but confirms the Muslim prayer leader and prays behind him.[46] The Muslim prayer leader of the end of time is generally identified as the Mahdi.[47] Incidentally, the name of the Muslim Antichrist figure, Dajjal, is a loan word from the Syriac *daggal* (liar). The prototype of Dajjal,[48] who is now the Antichrist and Anti-Mahdi in one, is most probably the Essene 'man of lies' who was the opponent of the Zadokite 'Teacher of Righteousness.'[49] This significant detail points to the commingling of Christian and Essene influences on pristine Islamic apocalypticism.

The Second Civil War (680–92) marked the true birth of the messianic figure of the Mahdi. The term *mahdi*, meaning the 'rightly-guided one', was first used in a messianic sense during the rebellion of Mukhtar in Kufa in 683 on behalf of a son of 'Ali, Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya. Its novel messianic connotation probably came from two distinct groups of his supporters who became known as the Kaysaniyya: southern Arabian tribes, and Persian and Mesopotamian clients (*mawali*) who were new converts to Islam. Meanwhile, another prototype of the Mahdi emerged from a different area of the three-sided civil war. The dispersal in the desert in 683 of an army sent by the Umayyad Caliph Yazid against the anti-Caliph 'Abdallah b. al-Zubayr upon hearing the news of the Caliph's death generated what may be the first *ex eventu* prophecy about an unnamed restorer of faith who was later taken to be the Mahdi. Two notable historical features of the event – the pledge of allegiance by the people of Mecca between the Rukn and the Maqim, and the swallowing up (*khasf*) of an army in the desert [between Mecca and Medina] – were absorbed into the apocalyptic literature.[50] In the course of time, these details agglutinated to the image of the Mahdi.

Despite the failure of Mukhtar's rebellion, the Kaysaniyya affirmed that

they 'hoped for a revolution (*dawla*) that would culminate in the Resurrection before the Hour'.[51] When Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya died in the year 700, the Kaysaniyya maintained that he was in concealment or occultation (*ghayba*) in the Radwa mountains and would return as the Mahdi and the Qa'im. The Kaysani poet, Kuthayyar (d. 723), hailed him as 'He is the Mahdi Ka'b the brother/fellow of the Ahbar had told us about', and affirmed that 'he is vanished in the Radwa, not to be seen for a while, and with him is honey and water'.[52]

When Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya's son, Abu Hashim, who had succeeded him, died childless in 717–18, some of his followers maintained that he was, like his father, the Mahdi and was alive in concealment in the Rawa mountains. The Kaysaniyya also spread the idea of *raj'a*, return of the dead, especially the Imams, with the help of such Qur'anic precedents as the resuscitation of the Companions of the Cave and the owner of the ass, be he Jeremiah or Ezra. Furthermore, it is very probably in connection with the expectation of the return of this Mahdi from occultation that the term *al-qa'im* (the Standing One, the Riser) became a major ingredient of the Shi'ite apocalyptic tradition. A valuable Syriac text, which pre-dates Islam and is suggestive of the influence of Kaysani Persian clients on the development of the notion, foretells that the Dajjal will beguile the Magi by telling them that Pashutan, one of the Zoroastrian immortals, has awakened from his sleep, 'and he is the Standing One (*qa'em*) before the Hurmizd, your God, who has appeared on earth'.[53] The fact that the Syriac *qa'em* was also the term used to translate the Greek *ho hestos* (the Standing One) gave the notion a welcome surplus of apocalyptic meaning.[54] In any event, the notion of occultation soon acquired chiliastic connotations through its association with the manifestation or *parousia* (*zuhur*), of the apocalyptic Qa'im.

Early Shi'ite traditions represent the Qa'im as the expected redresser of the cause of God (*al-qa'im bi amr Allah*) and the riser by the sword (*al-qa'im bi'l-sayf*), wearing the armour of the Prophet and wielding his sword, the *dhu'l-fiqar*. This picture can be supplemented by the early Imami Shi'ite traditions which present the Qa'im as the redresser of the house of Muhammad (*qa'im al Muhammad*),[55] modelled clearly on the Messiah as the restorer of the house of David.[56] He is at the same time the Lord of the Sword (*sahib al-sayf*)[57] and the avenger of the wrong done to the House of Muhammad by the usurpers of their rights: 'The weapon [of the Prophet] with us is like the ark with the children of Israel.'[58] The Qa'im will establish the empire of truth (*dawlat al-haqq*).[59]

The messianic idea of the Mahdi spread widely beyond the Kaysaniyya and other extremist Shi'ite groups, and as it became dissociated from its historical archetype, Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya. Other groups projected the

image of the Prophet on to him. An enormously influential tradition, attributed to 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, has Muhammad foretell the coming of a Mahdi coined in his own image: 'His name will be my name, and his father's name my father's name.'[60] Furthermore, widely-spread traditions assert that the number of the Mahdi's companions in battle is exactly the same (usually put at 313) as those of Muhammad in the apocalyptic battle of Badr.[61] One Sunni tradition goes even further and affirms that 'on his shoulder is the mark of the Prophet',[62] while some Shi'ite traditions have Gabriel to the right of the Mahdi on the battlefield and Michael to his left.[63]

The Abbasids

Islam's social revolution came a century and a quarter after the death of the Prophet. It was the Abbasid revolution, in which the apocalyptic worldview and political messianism played a major role. It is well known that the 'Alid and the Abbasid branches of the House of Muhammad vied for the leadership of the revolutionary movement that overthrew the Umayyad Caliphate. The intense apocalyptic character of the Abbasid revolution (744–63) remains largely unrecognized, however. This is surprising in view of the fact, firmly established by the publication of an Abbasid history of the mission in 1971, that the Hashimiyya, who organized the powerful clandestine revolutionary machine which eventually chose the Abbasids as its leaders, named themselves after the son of Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya, Abu Hashim, and were the main bearers of the Kaysanid apocalyptic tradition and Mahdism.[64]

The year 125 (743–44) was before long seen as the year of the *fitna* and of the *malahim*: 'Woe to the Arab after the year 125.'[65] Nor are the traditions that tell of the turn in power of the House of 'Abbas[66] in substance ana-chronistic. Traditions that show the Abbasid leaders assumed the messianic titles of Saffah, Mansur and Mahdi abound,[67] and are supported by both literary and epigraphic evidence of the assumption of the title of the Mahdi by the first Abbasid caliph, Abu'l-'Abbas.[68] There is also evidence that he claimed to be the Qa'im, even though this evidence has been generally over-looked.[69] 'Abd Allah b. 'Ali, the winner of the decisive battle of Zab and the destroyer of Marwan II and the Umayyads, was the original bearer of the title al-Saffah,[70] which was later anachronistically assumed to be the regnal title of the first Abbasid caliph.

The twelve kings of the fifth vision of Ezra (4 Ezra 12: 14), a remarkable text in political apocalypticism as the sequel to Daniel's vision of the fall of empires, was the likely source of inspiration for the particular tradition of the apocalyptic war (*malhama*) against the twelve kings, the least of whom is the king of Rome,[71] and more generally, for the expectation that the Umayyad

ruler after Yazid III would be the last. This expectation finds expression in a large number of traditions concerning 'the Twelve Caliphs from the Quraysh', which were evidently first circulated by those who hoped there would be no more caliphs from the Quraysh. This political oracle survived the Abbasid revolution as an autonomous cultural form in the repertoire of Muslim apocalyptic traditions. It served as a source of speculation for many groups and, as we shall see, later helped the Imami Shi'ites fix the number of their Imams at twelve.

It should be noted that some very valuable information about the Khurasanian partisans of the Abbasid revolution who fought under the messianic black banners is supplied by the apocalyptic traditions in the form of *ex eventu* prophecies. 'They have long hair, villages [and not tribes] are their genealogy, and their names are their surnames (*kunya*).'[72] And they spoke Persian, in some rare traditions: 'Their slogan is "*bokosh, bokosh*"!' (Kill, kill!)[73] Their leader, Abu Muslim, 'a man from the *mawali* who rises in Marw'[74] is the subject of several pejorative traditions: 'Scoundrel son of scoundrel [*laka' b. laka'*] will conquer the world'. 'The Hour will not rise until scoundrel son of scoundrel is the happiest of the people.'[75] These traditions place Khurasan firmly and conspicuously in the Islamic apocalyptic topography.[76]

The culmination of the revolutionary apocalypticism of the period for the 'Alids was the uprising, in 762, of Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah, al-nasf al-zakiyya (the Pure Soul), the namesake of the Prophet foretold in the above-mentioned Mahdist tradition whom the Abbasids themselves had accepted as the Qa'im and the Mahdi of the House of Muhammad before coming to power. 'Abd Allah, the father of the Mahdi and the head of the Hasanid descendants of 'Ali, claimed to be in possession of the sword and the armour of the Prophet which would evidently be put at the disposal of his son as the Lord of the Sword. The long-delayed rebellion of the Mahdi of the House of Muhammad in Arabia in 762 was followed by that of his brother, Ibrahim, who assumed the title of Hadi, in Iraq. The wide following of the Hasanid Mahdi included an 'extremist' group, the Mughiriyya, who considered him the Qa'im-Mahdi and with whom he had been in hiding in the mountain of Tamiyya before his uprising. After his death and the suppression of his uprising, the Mughiriyya claimed that he was alive and immortal, and was residing in the same mountain.[77] Furthermore, *ex eventu*, the rebellion of the Pure Soul contributed richly to the Shi'ite apocalyptic tradition. Indeed, 'the killing of the Pure Soul' became one of the signs of the Hour: 'There are only fifteen nights between the killing of the Pure Soul and the rising of the Qa'im.'[78] Further, 'Five [are the signs] before the rising of the Qa'im: the Yamani [presumably the Qahtani], the Sufyani, the caller who calls from the sky [sometimes identified as Gabriel], the swallowing in the desert, and the killing of the Pure Soul.'[79]

Although the head of the Husaynid branch of the 'Alids, Ja'far al-Sadiq, denied his Hasanid cousins' claim, and reportedly asserted that he himself had inherited the sword and the armour of the Prophet from his grandfather and was holding them in his house,[80] he was apparently not able to prevent his own sons from joining in the uprising of the Pure Soul. Ja'far's son, Musa al-Kazim (d. 799), is reported among the participants, and in fact learned to harness its persisting political messianism to longer-term designs of his own, albeit more subtly. Musa al-Kazim competed in clandestine political activism with the surviving Zaydis followers of his cousin, the Pure Soul. There is ample evidence in the early Shi'ite books on sects to prove that he followed the example of the latter in claiming to be the Qa'im-Mahdi, although the Imami compendia of tradition have systematically expunged the traces of this claim. His father, Ja'far, the Sixth Imam, is reported as saying that 'the Seventh [Imam] of yours will be your Qa'im', and has the same name as the bringer of the Torah (i.e. Moses). Musa is further likened to Jesus by his father in the same group of traditions.[81] Ja'far is also reported to have testified: 'He is the (divinely-)guided redresser (*al-qa'im al-mahdi*); if [you see] his head rolling toward you from the mountain, do not believe it, for he is your lord (*sahib*), the Qa'im.'[82] The Karbiyya, the Kaysani sub-sect to which the above-mentioned idea of the occultation of Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya is attributed, appear to have joined Musa.[83] If so, they may have brought with them the apocalyptic idea of occultation which was anyway available through other channels as well. Caliph Harun al-Rashid imprisoned Musa in 793; he was released and then imprisoned for a second time. His two periods of imprisonment gave rise to the idea, circulated by his followers, that the Qa'im would have two occultations, a short one followed by a longer one extending to his rising. Several groups of Musa's followers who became known as the Waqifiyya (cessationists) refused to accept that he had died, and/or maintained instead that he was the Qa'im and the Mahdi and had gone into occultation.[84] One group emphasized his likeness to Jesus and, while admitting his death, expected his Second Coming.[85] Others maintained that he was in occultation (his namesake Moses, too, had been in occultation)[86] and would return as the Qa'im-Mahdi. Even one sceptical group prepared to give some credence to the evidence of their eyes (the Caliph had displayed Musa's corpse prominently on a bridge in Baghdad), suspended judgment on his death 'because of numerous undeniable traditions proving that he was the Qa'im-Mahdi'.[87] The Waqifiyya constituted the most important channel for the direct transmission of apocalyptic beliefs, most notably the idea of occultation, to Imami (Twelver) Shi'ism, as the leading figures in the movement later rejoined the Imami fold under the Eighth Imam, 'Ali al-Rida.[88]

After the suppression of the uprising of the Hasanid Mahdi, the second

Abbasid Caliph, Abu Ja'far, appropriated from the Mahdist repertoire the titles of the Mansur (helper [of the Mahdi]), the Mahdi (rightly-guided) and the Hadi (the one who guides), adopting them as regnal titles for himself, his son and his grandson. Thereafter, the containment of political messianism under the Abbasid Caliphate took the formulaic statement that the progeny of 'Abbas would rule the world until the end of time when they would transfer sovereignty to the Mahdi or to Jesus.[89] By contrast, the containment of political messianism in sectarian Twelver Shi'ism took a hierocratic direction.

After the death of the Eleventh Imam, two of the fourteen groups into which the Imami Shi'a had split took up the ideas of the Waqifiyya. One splinter group argued that, as a childless imam cannot die and leave the world devoid of proof (*hujja*) of God, the Eleventh Imam, Hasan al-'Askari, had not died but had gone into occultation. He was the Qa'im-Mahdi, and would have two occultations.[90] In the course of the next two decades, these neo-Waqifite ideas were adopted in modified form by the leadership of the nascent Imami hierarchy. 'Uthman b. Sa'id al-'Amri, and his son, Muhammad, who had been the agents of the Tenth and Eleventh Imams, remained in control of the seat of the Imam after the latter's death, and claimed to be acting on behalf of a son of Hasan al-'Askari, who was in occultation. A number of decrees and rescripts purporting to emanate from the Imam in *ghayba* were issued in the handwriting of Muhammad b. 'Uthman over a period of two decades. When this communication ceased, the neo-Waqifite notion of the two occultations was drawn upon to explain the breakdown of communication between the hidden Imam and the community. Muhammad b. 'Uthman al-'Amri's close associate, Abu Sahl al-Nawbakhti, adopted the idea of the two occultations for announcing the beginning of a new stage, the second and the harder occultation: 'For him, there are two occultations, one of them harder than the other.'[91]

Thus, at the beginning of the tenth/fourth century, the nascent Imami Shi'ite hierocracy thus de-apocalypticized the idea of occultation. In the same period, the above-mentioned political oracle of the twelve Caliphs from the Quraysh was turned into an *ex eventu* prophecy that fixed the number of the imams permanently at twelve.[92] In the second half of that century, the Shaykh al-Sadiq, Ibn Babuya, greatly developed the analogy between the occultation of the Imam and the absence of the prophets; and the rationalist doctors of the eleventh century, the Shaykh al-Mufid, the Sayyid al-Murtaza and the Shaykh al-Ta'ifa al-Tusi, vigorously rebutted the charge that the occultation of the Imam meant the abeyance of the divine law, and recast the explanation of the *ghayba* within the framework of their Mu'tazilite-inspired nomocratic theology. Occultation was no longer a cause for perplexity because, thanks to the divine law and grace (*lutf*), the believer knew what to do in the absence

of the Imam. The hidden Imam would perpetually rule the world through the visible hierocracy of 'ulama.[93]

Medieval Trends

While the Imami hierocracy was beginning to contain political messianism through a quietistic transformation of the idea of occultation, Shi'ite political messianism erupted in the shape of the Isma'ili revolutionary movement, and with it came a pronounced millennialism in the form of political astrology. From the typological point of view, it is particularly felicitous to end this essay on medieval Islamic history with a brief examination of the Isma'ili movement as Isma'ilism combined political Messianism, or Mahdism, and millennialism within a firmly apocalyptic worldview.

Apocalyptic revelation of a new creation here and now transforms the present into a moment of revolutionary liminality, of the great opening and freedom from tradition.[94] Liminal anxiety generated by apocalypticism is a source of constant pressure for certainty, and results in the reification of the apocalyptic future. The oldest techniques for the fabrication of predetermined futures are numerology and astrology. Numerology is the oldest technique for the calculation of the predetermined future. Its reception in Islam as the science of *jafr* is quite early, that science being attributed to Daniel but also to the Sixth Shi'ite Imam, Ja'far b. Muhammad, presumably on account of the red leather bag known as the *jafr*. The Shi'ites believed that it contained secret scrolls as well as the weapons of the Prophet and was in the possession of Ja'far al-Sadiq, who had inherited it from his father and grandfather.[95]

The distinctive Muslim science for the prediction of the predetermined future, however, is what I would call political astrology. This science for the astral determination of political upheavals was developed with the hindsight of the Abbasid revolution. It adopted the Sasanian astrological techniques for predictions of dynastic change on the basis of Ptolemaic astronomy, super-imposed on Zoroastrian millennialism.[96] It was developed by Masha'Allah, the Jewish astrologer who, together with the Zoroastrian astrologer Nawbakht, advised the second Abbasid Caliph, Mansur, on the time and location of the new City of Peace (*madinat al-salam*, Baghdad) in 762, and by his disciple Abu Ma'shar al-Balkhi (d. 886).[97] A practitioner of this science who was a contemporary of Abu Ma'shar, Ibn Abu Tahir Tayfur (d. 893), saw the heavenly revolution of stars replicated in a great revolution in *imperium* or world domination. Masha' Allah's calculations had shown the rise of Islam; the Arabs' turn in power/domination (*dawla*) had been determined by the Shift of Triplicity on 19 March 571.[98] Tayfur used this and other horoscopes and demonstrated that the next major event on earth occurred at the

conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter. That Conjunction at the vernal equinox
in March 749 had determined 'the shift (*tahwil*) in the Conjunction of the
Arabian world domination to the Hashimite Imams' – that is, the Abbasid
revolution, which Ibn Abu Tahir Tayfur described as 'the general revolution
in religion and the state' (*al-inqilab al-kulli fi'l-din wa'l-mulk*).[99] Apocalyptic
numerological speculations continued through the centuries, producing endless
calculations of the Hour and of lesser events.[100] However, it was political
astrology that became the most respected science of prediction of the
predetermined future revolutions in world domination, and thus stimulated
numerous apocalyptic uprisings throughout Islamic history.

Political astrology played an important role in the history of the Isma'ili
revolutionary movement. The conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the year
296 (908–9) must have stimulated the Isma'ili missionary, 'Abd Allah al-Shi'i,
who set up the Fatimid state for the Mahdi in North Africa in 909.[101] Our
documentation for the consequences of the next conjunction twenty years
later is much better. Biruni mentions a prediction, based on erroneous
astronomical calculations, of the appearance of the Qa'im at the eighteenth
conjunction after the birth of Muhammad, which is made to coincide with
'the tenth millennium, which is presided over by Saturn and Sagittarius'. At
that time, the era of Islam and the rule of the Arabs will come to an end. The
Qa'im will rise and 'will restore the rule of Magism'.[102] In Rayy, a city in
central Iran to the north of Isfahan, Abu Hatim al-Razi had been spreading
the same astrological prediction of the coming of the Qa'im.[103] We can further
read in Biruni that the Isma'ilis who had established the Qarmatian state in
Bahrain 'promised each other the arrival of the Expected One (*al-muntazar*)
in the seventh conjunction of the Fiery Triplicity'.[104] When that conjunction
occurred in 928, as we shall see below, a young man from Isfahan was ready
to set out off for Bahrain to claim to be the expected Qa'im.

The great tenth-century Isma'ili encyclopaedia, the *Epistles of the Brethren
of Purity* (*Rasa'il ikhwan al-safa*), developed political astrology into an astrally
determined cyclical theory of history. The revolution of the stars determined
major changes in world history. Changes in the sovereignty of the dynastic
houses (*ahl bayt*) and civil wars occur at the conjunctions of Saturn and
Jupiter every twenty years, changes in world domination from one nation to
another at the shifts from one Triplicity to another every 240 years, and the
greatest revolutions of all, changes in religion by the great prophet-lawgivers,
occur every 960 (solar) years or every (lunar) millennium at the Great Con-
junction of Saturn and Jupiter at the shift back to the initial Triplicity of the
signs of fire.[105] The Brethren of Purity reconciled this duodecimal system of
the Zodiac with the heptads of the Judaeo-Christian sacred history. The
Prophet is made to say: 'The life of this world is seven thousand years; I have

been sent in the last of these millennia.'[106] Each millennium [= 960 solar years] is divided into two complete cycles, each consisting of four 120-year quarters of ascension, apogee, decline and clandestinity. The term Qa'im is given a new meaning in this astrological theory of history. Each 120-year quarter cycle is inaugurated by a Qa'im, who is followed by six imams. The Seventh Imam who completes the heptad is the Qa'im of the next quarter-cycle. The Qa'im of the Resurrection would be expected at the end of the millennium of Muhammad, which is the final millennium.[107]

The political messianism of the Isma'ili movement was even more striking at the beginning. In fact, Isma'ilism was the most important of the medieval Mahdist movements, and it rested on the archetypal belief that a grandson of Ja'far al-Sadiq, Muhammad b. Isma'il, had not died and was the Qa'im-Mahdi.[108] The Isma'ili missionaries first appear in Iraq and the Yemen during the last quarter of the ninth century, engaged in propaganda on behalf of the expected Mahdi-Qa'im whom they considered the Seventh and last Imam of the Islamic era. God was 'preparing the paradise of Adam for Muhammad b. Isma'il'.[109] He would soon remove the veil of external reality by abolishing the Law, and reveal the True Religion. Each missionary (*da'i*) was in charge of an 'Island' (*jazira*) where he established a communistically-organized 'abode of migration' (*dar al-hijra*), so designated after the model built by the Prophet after his migration to Medina, and raised contributions on behalf of the expected Mahdi-Qa'im. The missionaries were directed by the Proof (*hujja*) of the Hidden Imam who moved to Salamia in Syria and established the headquarters of the clandestine revolutionary movement. Around the year 885, the Islma'ilis first took up arms in the Yemen.[110] According to Halm's careful reconstruction of this obscure, early phase of the movement, in the late 890s, the Proof in Salamiya decided to split the mythical Seventh Imam–Mahdi–Qa'im to its component parts, claiming the Imamate for himself and designating his nephew (he had no son) the Mahdi, and the latter's young son, the Qa'im. The nephew, Sa'id b. al-Husayn, renamed himself 'Abd Allah al-Mahdi and his infant son, Muhammad al-Qa'im. Not only did the latter become Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah, like the Prophet, but he was also given the latter's *kunya*, Abu'l-Qasim. This decision caused a split in the Isma'ili movement.

Those who accepted the New Mahdi availed themselves of secondary apocalyptic titles. The chief of the mission in the Yemen, Ibn Hawshab, as we have seen, assumed the title of 'the Mansur of the Yemen'. The two sons of the missionary Zakaroye, who established an ephemeral state for the Mahdi in Syria in 903, also put forward apocalyptic claims of their own. The older one appeared with the name Yahya b. Zakaroye, or rather named himself Yahya b. Zecharaia (presumably John the Baptist) whom the Qur'an mentions

as one of the prophets and blesses 'on the day he is born and the day he dies and the day he is raised alive' (Q. 19: 15). He claimed to be a descendant of Muhammad b. Isma'il, and maintained that his crippled arm was a miraculous sign. He was named the Shaykh by his followers who called themselves the Fatimids (after the daughter of the Prophet, Fatima, from whom the Imams, including Muhammad b. Isma'il, descended), and was also known as the Man of the She-Camel (*sahib al-naqa*), as he claimed the camel mare he rode on the battlefield was divinely guided, evoking the She-Camel of God (*naqat Allah*) (Q. 11: 64), whose killing by the nation of the prophet Salih brought about their destruction. When the Shaykh fell in battle, his brother, al-Husayn, saw to the disappearance of his body, and took over the leadership of the Fatimids. He claimed his birthmark was his sign, and accordingly became known as the Man of the Birthmark (*sahib al-shama*), and his aide and cousin assumed the obscurely apocalyptic Qur'anic title of al-Muddathir ('the one who covers himself').[111] In the autumn of 903, while the Mahdi remained in hiding in Palestine, the Man of the Birthmark had the Friday sermon read in the name of 'the Lord of the Age (*sahib al-zaman*), the Commander of the Faithful, the Mahdi'.[112] The uprising for the Mahdi was suppressed by the forces of the caliph, and the Mahdi himself fled from Palestine to Egypt, and thence to Sijilmasa in North Africa. He was robbed by bandits who took his books of astrological oracles and secret writings. The books on political astrology, which were later recovered in Egypt by his son al-Qa'im, can safely be assumed to have contained the prediction of the passing of world domination from the Arabs at the Conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the year 296 (908–9).[113] As was pointed out, in the year 909, the missionary who had been active on the Mahdi's behalf in North Africa in fact established the Fatimid state for 'Abd Allah al-Mahdi who was in due course succeeded by his son, Muhammad al-Qa'im.[114] The messianic manifestation of the Qa'im-Mahdi was realized triumphally as the succcesive reigns of the Fatimid Mahdi and the Fatimid Qa'im. The Fatimids conquered Egypt in 969, and their empire, extended to Egypt and Syria, lasted two more centuries until it was overthrown by Saladin (Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi) in 1171. Against the backdrop of this imperial 'realized Mahdism', the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz declared that his name and those of other Fatimid Imams had been inscribed at the base of the divine throne and read by Adam.[115]

The Isma'ilis who refused to accept the authority of the new Mahdi and remained faithful to the apocalyptic belief in the imminent return of Muhammad b. Isma'il as the Mahdi-Qa'im after the schism, became known as the Qarmatis (Qarmatians) after their putative original leader, Hamdan Qarmat. The Qarmatians predominated in the 'islands' of Iraq and Bahrain (al-Bahrayn), and they succeeded in establishing a state in the latter region shortly

after the schism. At the beginning of the tenth century, the Qarmatians proclaimed the sovereignty of the Qa'im-Mahdi in their communally organized state which was remarkably egalitarian and, in theory, collectively governed. The tenth-century geographers Muqaddasi and Ibn Hawqal report respectively that in the Qarmatian state there was a 'treasury (*khazina*) of the Mahdi' and one-fifth of the revenues were kept for the Lord of the Time (*sahib al-zaman*).[116] In the year of the seventh conjunction of the Fiery Triplicity, 928, a young man from Isfahan who claimed to be the descendant of the Persian kings had joined the Qarmatians in Bahrain. A few years earlier, in January 925, presumably in anticipation of the astrally determined turn in domination, a man claiming to be Muhammad b. Isma'il appeared and gathered a large band of Bedouin around him.[117] Later that year, the caliphal police discovered a group of Qarmatians, called the Baqliyya, whose members carried clay seals stamped with the inscription, 'Muhammad b. Isma'il, the Mahdi-Imam, the friend of God'. What appears like spontaneous Mahdistic agitation among the Baqliyya was suppressed, and some of the survivors drifted to Bahrain and became known as the Ajamiyyun (the thicket dwellers).[118] In 930, the Qarmatians attacked Mecca, massacred the pilgrims and carried away the black stone to mark the end of the era of Islam. Meanwhile, the young man from Isfahan soon found his way to the inner circle of the Qarmatian elite and was told by one insider to approach the *de facto* ruler of Bahrain and the son of its founder: 'Go to Abu Tahir and tell him that you are the man to whose allegiance his father and he himself had summoned the people. If he then asks you for signs and proofs, reveal these secrets to him.'[119] Abu Tahir, whose poetry declaims that he would live until the coming of Jesus, son of Mary, recognized the signs and publicly surrendered the sovereignty to the Qa'im from Isfahan in 931. According to the eye-witness account of the physician Ibn Hamdan, Abu Tahir declared:

> Know then, community of men, that the [true] religion has henceforth ap-
> peared. It is the religion of our father Adam, and all the belief we had was
> false. All the things missionaries made you hear, their talk about Moses, Jesus
> and Muhammad, was falsehood and deceit. The [true] religion is in fact the
> religion of Adam, and those are all wily Dajjals; so curse them.[120]

The Mahdi of Isfahan ruled for eighty days that ended in disaster. The apocalyptic Isma'ilis of Iran had sought to put Islam in the perspective of the history of religions, identified Zoroaster with Abraham, and at least one of their theorists, Nasafi, had presented the religion of Adam as the natural religion, religion without the Law. The Isfahani Mahdi, who evidently took the astral sign to indicate the end of the era of world domination by the Arabs and beginning of the domination of the Persians, ordered the worship

of fire, established links with the Zoroastrian clergy in Iran and had the biblical prophets as well as the Imams, including 'Ali, cursed in public. All this was too much for Abu Tahir who had him seized and killed.[121] This instance of 'realized millennialism' thus turned out to be a complete disaster and was recognized as such by its main instigator.

A century and a half later, or in 1094 to be more precise, the Nizari Isma'ilis also broke off from the Fatimids. Some Nizaris believed their Imam was in occultation and would return as the Qa'im-Mahdi. Their redoubtable leader, Hasan Sabbah (d. 1124), however, soon propounded 'the new preaching' (*da'wat-e jadid*), opted for a hidden Imam with a visible Proof (*hujja*) as the head of the mission and for supreme authority in the authoritative teaching (*ta'lim*) of the adepts. The Nizaris, who called each other 'comrade' (*rafiq*), held a number of impregnable fortresses in the mountains of Iran and Syria which they used for training the zealous devotees (*fida'i*) and developing the technique of political assassination in the revolutionary struggle against the Seljuq empire.[122]

On 8 August 1164/17th of Ramadan 559, the ruler of Alamut and other Nizari Isma'ili fortresses, Hasan II b. Muhammad b. Buzurg-Umid, proclaimed the Resurrection as the Deputy (*khalifa*) and Proof (*hujja*) of the Imam and the Riser of the Resurrection (*qa'im al-qiyama*).[123] He was evidently impatient with the calculations of the Brethren of Purity, and refusing to wait until their appointed time, which was the end of the Islamic millennium, had used a different horoscope.[124] This meant that the era (*dawr*) of the Law and external reality had come to an end and the era of inner reality had begun. All believers could know God and the cosmic mysteries through the Imam, and God would constantly be in their hearts.

Hasan II was fatally stabbed in January 1166, but his son Muhammad II confirmed the continuation of the Resurrection which lasted for a total of forty-six years to 1210. The mission was now 'the call to [or, preaching of] Resurrection (*da'wat-e qiyamat*),[125] and the Nizaris considered themselves 'the saved community of the Qa'imites (*qa'imiyin*)'.[126] As time went on, the doctrine of the Resurrection as developed by Muhammad II, who claimed Imamate for himself and his father as putative descendants of Nizar, made the Imam the manifestation of the word and command of God through whose vision the believers could find themselves in Paradise. He added the Sufi level of truth (*haqiqa*) to the Isma'ili levels of external and inner reality and identified it with the Resurrection.[127]

Hasan II, 'upon whose mention be peace', was now considered the Qa'im as well as the Imam, but the meaning of the term changed radically because of the declaration of Resurrection. A treatise written some forty years into the Resurrection reaffirmed the old Isma'ili idea that 'Ali was the Qa'im of the

Resurrection, but also asserted that 'all the Imams are 'Ali (bless him) himself, and will be'.[128] It is true that the Qa'im of the Resurrection, 'in this period of ours … in the clime of the sun … in the land of Babylon among the lands of the 'Ajam (non-Arabs) … in the midst of the Jabal (mountainous region) … at the castle of Alamut, he was Our Lord [Hasan II]'.[129] But the Qa'im is no longer restricted to that particular incarnation. He is the eternal Imam and the primordial Adam who completes the cycle of revelation (*kashf*).[130] With the Resurrection, the Qa'im as the New Adam is and ever will be in the heart of the people of truth, imparting to them the authoritative teaching (*ta'lim*) that transcends the duality of external and inner reality and makes possible the full pantheistic plenitude of existence.[131] By completing the cycle of revelation (*kashf*), the Great Resurrection is the apocalyptic appropriation of the world through the universal integration of saving knowledge into the daily lives of the people of truth. With this kenosis of the apocalyptic into Sufi mystical pantheism, the 'realized apocalypticism' of the Isma'ilism took the form of mystical life in what purported to be post-history.

Epilogue

The apocalyptic perspective that underlies both political messianism and astrological millennialism was integrated into pristine Islam by Muhammad. I have surveyed the unfolding of political messianism and astrological millennialism in revolutionary action and their subsequent containment with regard to the rise of Islam, the Abbasid and Isma'ili (Fatimid) revolutions, and the development of the doctrine of occultation in Twelver Shi'ism. Each time, with the realization of the apocalyptic vision, messianism and millennialism in history, the apocalyptic perspective was temporarily closed, but the closure could never be definitive. The apocalyptic, messianic and millennial elements remained contained in the Islamic tradition, but as can be seen in chapters 9 and 14 by Bashir and Cole, could always be reactivated under favourable conditions.

III

Medieval and Early Modern Periods

Medieval Europe: Religious Enthusiasm and Social Change in the 'Millennial Generation'

R. I. Moore

The apathy and despair in which the expectation of the end of the world had held the spirits of the tenth century were dissipated, to give way to prodigious activity which imparted an entirely new impulse to the arts and literature.

The social entity which is called France was formed, came into existence, only at the end of the tenth century … this development deserves, for the first time, the name of French civilization.[1]

Without reviving the romantic fantasy of 'the terrors of the year 1000' – that is, the anticipation of the end of the world at the millennium of the incarnation (or the resurrection) of Christ, according to the prophecy of St John the Divine – discarded by the scientific historians of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the last fifteen or twenty years have seen a dramatic revival of interest in the millennium; the millennium, that is, in the most literal possible sense, the years between 1000 and 1033 and the decades perceived by many as leading up to and away from them. Put as simply as possible – and therefore, no doubt too simply – two questions about the first millennium are being discussed increasingly furiously. First, is it indeed the case that the course of European history changed sharply – so sharply as to imply a 'revolution' or at least, in the phrase popularized by Poly and Bournazel,[2] a 'mutation' – at that time? Second, if so was there a connection between the change and the date? That is, did thoughts, anxieties and expectations associated with the millennium make a significant, even an indispensable contribution to that change?

Historiographically, the two questions have rather different lineages. The first, in its modern form, has arisen from the work of Georges Duby, quite

independently of interest in the millennium as such, and in contexts which accord if not marginal, certainly secondary importance to the history of ideas and of popular religious convictions. In 1946 and 1947 Duby published the results of his 'researches on the evolution of judicial institutions in southern Burgundy',[3] showing that Carolingian public justice remained effective in the region around Mâcon throughout the tenth century, only to collapse with great suddenness between *c*. 1000 and *c*. 1030, when justice became the private prerogative of the proprietors of castles. In consequence humble but free peasants lost the essential guarantee of their liberty, and became helpless to resist enserfment by the knights who alone remained strong enough to answer only to the count. In 1953 Duby's richly detailed thesis, making masterly use of the exceptional archives of the bishopric of Mâcon and the abbey of Cluny, provided a comprehensive and closely argued context for the causes and consequences of that momentous change, and therefore for what is now the orthodoxy that it was the decades around 1000, rather than those around 1100, that constituted the critical turning point in early European history.[4] This proposition began to be assimilated into general historical consciousness, however, only in the 1960s and 1970s when Duby began to write works of synthesis that were quickly and widely translated,[5] and when the work of his students and other younger scholars influenced by him began to be published in considerable quantity.[6] From the present point of view, Pierre Bonnassie's account of the extremely violent imposition of the *seigneurie* in Catalonia, slightly later than in Duby's Maconnais, has been particularly influential.[7] From that point onwards the victory was swift and seemingly definitive. In the 1980s a growing flood of publications, covering an increasingly comprehensive array of fields and activities, confirmed that the eleventh century had assumed the mythic status once accorded to the twelfth, as the time when the structures of European society and the lineaments of European culture assumed their essential shape.[8]

Both topographically and conceptually the implications of Duby's work went well beyond the southern Maconnais in which it was rooted, especially with the publication in 1973 of Pierre Toubert's magnificent study of the Latium (to the north and east of Rome), which while making important conceptual additions and modifications to Duby's model also showed that the sequence and chronology of events which he had proposed were broadly applicable in a region of very different history and ecology, and especially that the subjugation of a previously free peasantry took place suddenly and violently, though here in the second half of the tenth century rather than the early decades of the eleventh.[9] These conclusions radically challenged the traditional chronological framework of medieval and therefore of European history, in which it had long been axiomatic that the reconstruction of

European society in the high middle ages began with the pontificates of Leo
IX, Alexander II and Gregory VII (1050s to 1080s) and the conflicts within
the Church and between Church and laity to which they gave rise, and in
secular affairs with the revival of monarchical vigour and authority, assisted
by that of commerce and urban life which (at least in Northern Europe) were
barely beginning to make themselves felt in the same decades. We should
note at this point, since this chapter will be rather narrowly focused on
religious and political activity in western France, how comfortably these
conclusions sit with the wider tendency of the past quarter of a century or
so to describe the later tenth and early eleventh centuries in almost every part
of Western Europe as a time of increasingly dynamic and varied economic
activity, not only in the Mediterranean but throughout the regions bordering
the North Sea, which had been animated since the seventh century at least
by a greater volume and variety of exchange than we dreamed of in the days
when we depended entirely on the literary evidence.[10] These economies were
being stimulated in the tenth and early eleventh centuries not only by the
connections established along the Russian rivers with the advanced economies
of the Byzantine and Arab worlds, but by the flow of silver from the newly
discovered mines in the Harz mountains and, more lucrative still, of tribute
from the military successes of emperors and nobles on the eastern frontier of
Saxon and Salian Germany.[11] Although the territories in which the changes
that led to 'the making of the middle ages' or even 'the birth of Europe' had
most usually been sought and debated – northern and western France and
northern Italy – were very far from being stagnant in the tenth century, as
the old story had it, it would be nearer the truth to describe them as among
the more backward parts of Europe than as the most dynamic.

Duby's revision seemed, and still does, to fit very neatly with the other and
greater revolution in historical periodization achieved in the same decades by
Peter Brown and his legion of students and followers. Brown has taught us
to abandon the notion of an 'antiquity' giving way rather suddenly to the
'middle ages' with the decline of the western empire in the fifth century, in
favour of a 'late antiquity' which experienced a long and comprehensive, but
also slow and gradual transformation running all the way from the third
century to the eighth, or even beyond.[12] His perspective seemed to be illus-
trated and reinforced by the more narrowly focused studies of the French
'neoromanists',[13] reviving and reinvigorating the conception of a society – a
southern society, it should be said[14] – still essentially Roman in its structures,
institutions and even religious attitudes and observances right up to the tenth
century, when it collapsed cataclysmically before the onslaught of seigneurial
violence which constituted the 'feudal revolution'.

It is only to be expected that such a radical reinterpretation of the course

of temporal change should seek its spiritual counterpart. Indeed, if we were in search of a test by falsifiability for this new periodization, and of the question whether the transformation of the society and institutions of Western Europe which, everyone agrees, occurred between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries was revolutionary or evolutionary in nature, a good one might be precisely whether the religious changes which took place at the same time are amenable to the same chronology and explanation. In this context we need to remember the work of two masters who have not written directly on the issues with which we are concerned here, but who bestride our little world like colossi. Jacques le Goff's profound reading of texts ostensibly dedicated to piety or fantasy, exactly placed in their social and economic context and informed by the questions and insights of anthropology, have placed our grasp of mental structures and horizons on an entirely new plane. His insights help us appreciate the rhythms of very long-term change as well as the ways in which ritual can be used in the shorter term to capture and if necessary enforce changes in the modes of domination and exploitation.[15] The same sensitivity to the ways in which religious change and religious conflict can illuminate what are otherwise the most mysterious problems of social relations – the acquisition and exercise of power in small communities, how the connections and tensions between the lofty and the humble, the strong and the weak, the literate and the peasant, the city and the countryside, operate and are animated – has lain at the heart of Peter Brown's work since the late 1960s.[16] That is what has made his 'world of late antiquity' so much more than a mere revival of the continuity thesis of the nineteenth-century 'Romanists', or even of Pirenne's magnificent perception of the context provided for the post-classical societies of its western extremity by the rhythms of first millennium Eurasia.[17]

Georges Duby himself always showed considerable sensitivity to the interpretation of religion in the context of social change, and many of his writings, especially in the 1960s, are enlivened by comments on popular heresy far shrewder and more illuminating than what was being produced at that time by specialists in the field.[18] His most developed statement of his thesis of a 'feudal revolution' centred on the decades around the millennium, *Les trois ordres* (1978), contains a powerful chapter which presents the heresies of the early eleventh century as a response to the process of enserfment and seigneurialization then in full flood, and (more originally) of the heightened anxiety about heresy shown by Adalberto of Laon, Gerard of Cambrai and others as an attempt to buttress a traditional social and political order against the forces that were about to overwhelm it. Even more relevant to our present concerns is the short work of popularization, *L'An Mil,* which Duby had already published in 1967, consisting largely of translations from the narrative

sources of French history in the decades after the millennium, in which the famous passages from Radulphus Glaber and Ademar of Chabannes describing the so-called 'terrors of the Year 1000' figure prominently. Duby's introduction begins: 'A people terrorised by the imminence of the end of the world: in the minds of many cultured people this image of the year One Thousand remains alive today despite what Marc Bloch, Henri Focillon or Edmond Pognon have written to destroy it.' After discussing the reasons for the continuing fascination exercised by such ideas, and describing the Europe of the Year 1000 as one beginning to emerge from a long period of barbarism and depression, he concludes: 'the most modern interest [of historians], the attempt to reconstruct the pyschological attitudes of the past, makes these once more essential sources. Hence the texts presented in this collection are deliberately oriented towards the history of mentalities.'[19] Letting the texts speak for themselves is, for historians engaged in pedagogy, an irreproachable objective, and doubtless explains why Duby did not find it necessary, either in his preface or in the text or (meagre) notes and bibliography, to obtrude upon his readers any of the considerations which had led Bloch, Focillon or Pognon to doubt the extent to which the peasantry of tenth-century Europe was prostrated by the anticipation of the millennium. Perhaps, after all, in a post-positivist age, it was unnecessary to fear that the readers might expect what they read to correspond to reality.

Duby's willingness to take the religious ideas and movements associated (or allegedly associated) with the millennium increasingly seriously has obviously added great authority to the recent reaction against the positivist dismissal of these 'millennial anxieties' as a significant force for change. The main impulse for re-evaluating them has sprung from a renewed interest in the narratives of the early eleventh century – what Richard Landes has called 'the millennial generation' of those who lived through and beyond the approach of 1000 and 1033 – in France,[20] especially the vast corpus of Ademar of Chabannes, and from a reading of them which owes much to interest in, and concern about, mass and messianic movements especially of the late twentieth century, in which Landes has been a leading figure and will be taken here, at the cost of some unfairness to his colleagues and collaborators which he will be the first to deplore, as the champion and representative. In their second coming, however, millenarian anxieties and expectations are regarded less as the source of paralysing terror which for the Romantics kept Europeans cowering in stagnation, than as an energizing and liberating force which inspired them momentarily to throw off the shackles of custom and exploitative lordship, and in doing so to provoke a repressive reaction which helped to consolidate the new seigneurial regime. This, of course, is a perspective which derives from the insights of modern social theory, especially as they were introduced

to medievalists by Norman Cohn in what remains one of the twentieth century's most exciting books on the middle ages, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*.[21] Paradoxically, Cohn's riveting account of messianic movements in medieval Europe does not mention the events of the early eleventh century which are the subject of this chapter. Writing before the implications of Duby's work had begun to percolate, he assumed with the rest of the historical world that all was darkness, and stillness, until the age of the Crusades.[22]

In applying the insights and models used by Cohn to an earlier generation, therefore, Landes and others raise a fresh set of questions about the perspective itself, as well as about the nature and adequacy of their sources to sustain it. In addition, as beneficiaries of Duby's historiographical revolution, which identifies the millennium as a crucial turning point in European history, they now find themselves at the eye of a storm of counter-revolution which seems to have gathered all the more force and rage from the fact that it was for so long delayed. For if Duby's account is still very widely accepted, and in some quarters tenaciously defended, it has come under an increasingly withering and comprehensive fire, very largely inspired and for some years almost single-handedly sustained by Dominique Barthélemy. It is unnecessary, and would be impracticable, here to survey the extremely broad front across which Barthélemy, in a continuing series of massively detailed and forensically devastating papers and a superb 1,000-page monograph, has insisted that the social and political structures of the Carolingian world neither retained (or indeed achieved) such vigour as Duby and his followers maintain until 1000, nor disappeared so comprehensively and cataclysmically thereafter.[23] Our concern is rather to test the matter in relation to the single, though in themselves quite sufficiently complicated, set of issues represented by the body of sources which suggest that the generations before and after the millennium saw an eruption of seditious or potentially seditious popular activity, inspired by religious fervour. Such activity was manifested in the movement for Peace of God which has attracted so much attention in the last few years, and in the first assertions since antiquity that heretical preachers were active and heretical convictions current among the poor. The evaluation of reports of both of these phenomena has in recent discussions been held to turn largely on the view that is taken of the currency and influence of apocalyptic beliefs stimulated by the approach of the millennium. These issues, clearly, are crucial to both of our initial questions, whether there was indeed a social revolution at that time, and, if so, whether or how the fact had anything to do with the date at which it took place.

In 1997 Barthélemy's critique of 'mutationism' took a new turn with a powerful assault both on the view sustained by the fine volume of essays which Landes and Tom Head edited a few years ago, about the Peace of God

movement[24] as both indicative and productive of profound social crisis, and on Landes's thesis, defended (if that is the right word for so vigorously sustained an assault on orthodoxy) in many articles and in his book on Ademar of Chabannes,[25] that popular belief in the impending apocalypse was correctly identified by the ruling elites as potentially a powerful engine of social change, supremely corrosive of hierarchy and imposed order, and therefore suppressed in the sources as ruthlessly as it was repressed in the real world.[26] It was (though I don't think Landes has actually used the word) a counter-revolutionary force, in so far as Duby's 'feudal revolution' was carried out by the elite in the interests of securing its own command of a newly dynamic and productive agrarian economy. Stressing the princely and ecclesiastical initiative for the Peace Councils and their (undisputed) roots in Carolingian powers and institutions which they gave every appearance of attempting to restore, Barthélemy sees their ostensible concern for the protection of the poor as an expression of the Carolingian chivalrous ideal, and the deployment of relics in their support as a symptom (like other tenth- and eleventh-century expressions of popular opinion through religious activity) of the decline of the Carolingian order. The Councils were not anti-seigneurial in goal or character and, although they attracted a certain amount of popular support, the conflicts which gave rise to them were not conflicts between the aristocracy and the people; they arose essentially from the determination of the churches to defend their recent territorial acquisitions against the *milites*. Much of this is not in dispute; all of the points in this summary, for example, are accepted in my own essay in *The Peace of God*, to which Barthélemy objects as 'seeing in its popular success the resistance of an alodial peasantry oppressed by the "feudal revolution"'.[27] Whether or not I was right about that, the premise of my argument, that what people heard when they were called to defend the peace was not necessarily what they were meant to hear, is not affected by Barthélemy's appraisal, and has, as we shall see, a wider application. The central question that remains is not so much the character of the popular response to the call for peace as its depth, and the extent to which it can be regarded as expressing autonomous popular participation in public affairs rather than a mere reflexive reaction to ecclesiastical propaganda. To establish the ubiquity and potency in terms of social action of articulate, if not necessarily self-conscious, counter-revolutionary sentiment at a popular level would be strikingly to vindicate the reality of the revolution itself, as Duby and Bonnassie have frequently affirmed by the importance which they have attached to all indications of popular resistance to the creation of the new social order. It will become clear that I agree with Landes, against Barthélemy, in answering that question positively, though I profoundly disagree with him as to the reasons for it.

The history both of popular heresy and of millennial belief in the eleventh century long has been, and is at present very much in the condition of becoming again, a dialogue – if, too often, a dialogue of the deaf – between maximalist and minimalist approaches to the reading of the sources; that is, between those who have accepted that contemporary assertions and reports of heresy or of the currency of apocalyptic beliefs were intended literally, reported more or less accurately what their authors encountered, observed, or heard of from trustworthy sources, and should be taken broadly at face value, and on the other hand, those who see such assertions either as rhetorical devices in debates quite different from those to which they ostensibly relate, or as exaggerated and over-elaborated interpretations, based on expectations nourished by scriptural and patristic authority, of incidents which in themselves were of various and for the most part modest character and significance.[28] In reading the narratives of the peace rallies substantially as the product of ecclesiastical rhetoric, Barthélemy – a minimalist in respect of both phenomena, it need hardly be said – in effect applies a similar critique to these dramatic descriptions of how at Charroux, Narbonne, Poitiers and other places in south-western France between the 990s and 1030s, great crowds of the faithful rallied around the relics which had been carried from the monasteries, swearing to protect the property of the Church and the poor from the depredations of the *milites* who ravaged the countryside and terrorized its inhabitants.

The canonical definition of heresy insists upon what historians have too often forgotten, that, since error becomes heresy only when pertinaciously defended, and pertinacity can arise only after public rebuttal and a demand for recantation, normally from the bishop, it takes two to make heresy. The bishop must be determined to assert his authority, and the 'heretic' must be determined to stick to his guns. Especially given the high cost of doing so at most times and places in early European history, we are bound to assume that s/he had a good reason for doing so, though it may not always be easily discernible. It also follows from this definition that the history of 'heresy' is not one history but two, between which there is no necessary connection, each party having its own, quite possibly independent, reasons for making its assertion, and each party being capable of harbouring quite illusory expectations or anxieties about the other. Hence, for the sake of convenience and without prejudice to any of the obvious semantic and epistemological issues which the term raises, I will call 'real heresy' the knowing and persistent propagation of teachings based on the Gospels but contrary to those of the Catholic Church, and hence, at least by logically inescapable implication, the conscious repudiation of the authority of the Church, and specifically of its bishops. With the same reservation, I will term 'perceived heresy' the con-

viction entertained by bishops and other prelates, and by the monastic writers who shared their outlook and recorded their actions, that heresy was being propagated.

Leaving aside 'scholastic' disputes such as those which raged around Berengar of Tours during the middle decades of the century, all our evidence for popular heresy in the eleventh century – and indeed the twelfth – is of perceived heresy. No writings by the (alleged) heretics survive. The starting point for all discussion of real heresy therefore, and the basis of every controversy relating to its history, is the question of what may legitimately be inferred about it from what appears to us as perceived heresy. There is no denying that the decades after the millennium saw an enormous percentage increase in surviving reports of heresy among 'the people'. They rose from none at all in the tenth century[29] to a very small number in the eleventh. It must be added in justice that current activity is increasing that number, and seems likely to continue to do so; at the very least, as Daniel Callahan and Michael Frassetto work through the sermons of Ademar of Chabannes they will make further additions[30] to the assertion of his chronicle that in 1018 'Manichaeans appeared in Aquitaine, leading the people astray. They did not eat meat, as though they were monks, and pretended to be celibate, but among themselves they enjoyed every indulgence. They were messengers of Anti-christ, and caused many to wander from the faith.'[31] This famous comment, the earliest report of popular heresy in Western Europe since the eighth century, but the first trickle of what over the next 200 years became a raging torrent, contains almost all the difficulties around which discussion of the half dozen or so episodes (the precise number depending on the interpretation of each) reported in the 1020s, 1030s and 1040s has revolved. After the last of them, a letter written between 1043 and 1048 in which Wazo, Bishop of Liège discussed the discovery of heretics in a neighbouring diocese and how they should be dealt with,[32] there are no more until the twelfth century, creating a discontinuity in the 'origins of medieval heresy' which has itself been a source of much controversy and speculation. It was for long thought that the dietary and sexual abstinence of which Ademar complains, asserted also in reports from Piedmont, the Low Countries and Saxony, together with his characterization of the heretics as 'Manichees' and the fact that most reports of heresy say that it was brought to the district in question by outsiders, reflect the dissemination from Bulgaria, where it had flourished mightily in the tenth century, of the Bogomil heresy which was in turn believed to be descended through the many gnostic heresies that flourished in late antiquity from that of Mani himself. The repudiation of marriage (as well as the advocacy of celibacy), infant baptism, the mass, penance and ecclesiastical authority, each suggested in some (though none in all) of these reports, seemed

to support that interpretation, which may still be found, presented with characteristic lucidity and charm, in Sir Steven Runciman's *The Medieval Manichee*,[33] and with great forensic ingenuity as part of a highly organized conspiracy of international dimensions by Poly and Bournazel.[34] The latter, however, overlook or ignore what the former (in his first edition) had little opportunity to consider. By the early 1970s a comprehensive and minutely argued scholarly debate over some thirty years had convinced virtually every serious student of the subject, East and West, that every link in this chain was weak, if not fictitious. Rather, a variety of episodes, arising in various ways from the disparity between the simple idealism of the Gospels which the Church was beginning to preach more vigorously and the intimate entanglement of its hierarchy with the structures of local power, wealth and kinship which would tear Europe apart in the great struggle for 'reform' of the second half of the eleventh century, were given a spurious unity by the habit of classifying erroneous or troublesome teachings as heresies which had been condemned by the Fathers, or as fulfilling the prophecy of Paul that in the last times heretics would appear 'forbidding to marry and the eating of meat'.[35]

   To the best of my knowledge, nothing that has been said in the last twenty years weakens these well established conclusions in any way. On the other hand, a good deal has emerged, and is still doing so, especially from the work on the enormous surviving oeuvre of Ademar of Chabannes, who can now be seen as one of the most prolific though still largely unexploited writers of the entire medieval period, of Landes on his life and historical work, and of Daniel Callahan and Michael Frassetto, who are editing his sermons, to show that there was an intimate connection between the first signs of the emergence of popular heresy in the medieval West and the movement for the Peace of God in Aquitaine.[36] That movement began essentially as an attempt to recover from lay control monastic and cathedral lands which had been alienated to (or, in the ecclesiastical language of the moment, 'usurped' by) their lay patrons, and to resist the continuing attempts of the *milites* to build up new lordships for themselves at the expense of the churches, and of small free proprietors who were being reduced to serfdom, many of whom flocked to the standards of the peace in self-defence. Its leaders, however – the bishops and great abbots of the region, and the Duke of Aquitaine himself – though certainly opposed to such lawless self-aggrandisement on the part of others, were not (as Barthélemy rightly insists) opposed to the construction of the seigneurie *per se,* so long as control of the process remained in legitimate hands, to wit their own. Hence the disillusion which by 1028 caused the Duke of Aquitaine to summon a Council at Charroux, in Ademar's words, 'to wipe out the heresies which the Manichaeans had been spreading among the people'[37] – in stark contrast to the Peace Councils of the 990s, which had so stirringly called

upon the people to defend themselves and the churches against the trans-gressions of the knights.[38] There had already been signs that the accusation of heresy was being increasingly employed as a weapon in the struggle within the elite for control of landed property – hardly surprisingly, when the leading protagonists on one side of the dispute were bishops. We can see it, for example, in the charter from St Hilaire of Poitiers which Landes and Bonnassie reprinted in 1992.[39] Here Duke William V of Aquitaine, in 1016, is enforcing the reform of St Hilaire of Poitiers – that is, passing control of its lands to the bishop from the canons among whom they had been divided, as the custom was, by requiring the latter to lead the common life (that is to abjure private property and embrace the rule of celibacy, thus disinheriting any children they might inadvertently produce). The division in the chapter which might be anticipated in the circumstances was clearly present: the duke has ordered, at the behest of certain canons, that none of their number should sell goods or property belonging to St Hilaire, and any who disobey will be guilty of the sin of Arius – classically, that is, of dividing the church. Hence his reference to that heresy as responsible for 'the pullulation of wicked deeds sprung from the Arian heresy not only among the people, but even in Holy Church' is a rhetorical flourish which does not, as Landes and Bonnassie concluded, indicate the presence of popular heresy, but does point the way towards blaming popular resistance to ducal or episcopal authority for the presence of 'heresy' among the people which we first find in Ademar's assertion of the appearance of Manichees which he places under the year 1018 in his chronicle, but actually wrote about ten years later.

The most famous incident in the resurgence of the heresy accusation as a political device – often misleadingly spoken of as part of the emergence of popular heresy, though it contains no popular element whatsoever – is the trial at Orléans in 1022 which resulted in the burning of a large number of people – ten, fourteen or sixteen in different sources – including several canons of the cathedral. All were of the highest social standing, and one of the two alleged leaders of the sect was a former confessor to Queen Constance of France, the undermining of whose connection R.-H. Bautier showed long ago to have been a major objective of those, orchestrated by the faction of the Count of Blois, who unveiled the 'heresy' by infiltrating into the cathedral a member of the Norman ducal house in the guise of a seeker after religious illumination.[40] The affair, still in many regards mysterious, is too complicated to follow further here. Enough has been said to indicate the remoteness of its context from popular enthusiasm or discontent, while Barthélemy's suggestion that the accusation that the leaders of that group, Etienne and Lisois, denied the validity of ordination probably arose from their having accused fellow members of the chapter of simony further reinforces the general interpretation

offered here.[41] A campaign to extirpate simony would have been a normal constituent of the political intrigue behind the affair. In that context we might even regard the related 'discovery' of 'Manichees' at Toulouse in the same year as another possible trace of the wider drive against the 'alienation' of ecclesiastical property whose most familiar expression is the movement for the Peace of God.

In the first instances, therefore, allegations of heresy must be taken, like those of sorcery in early medieval courts, as evidence of increasing tension and widening sources of dispute within the social elite.[42] It is another matter to make a case for real and widespread anxiety in the elite about the spread of heresy among 'the people', let alone to establish that such alarm, if expressed, was justified by any corresponding reality. Nevertheless, it would be entirely unsurprising if the turning outwards of the accusation of heresy as a justification of repression rather than a stratagem of rivalry within the elite which we see reflected in Ademar's writings in the late 1020s and early 1030s had its counterpart in the emergence of a popular leadership to articulate the bitterness and disillusionment which spread as it became apparent that the Peace of God, far from heralding an era of peace and justice, was being used to consolidate and legitimize the building of castles, the imposition of seigneurial justice and labour services, and the other evils against which such enthusiasm had been aroused in the 990s. To speculate about the priority between chickens and eggs would be as futile in this context as in any other. The arguments which such popular spokespeople might be expected to have deployed must also be largely a matter of speculation. But Michael Frassetto argues[43] persuasively that a group of sermons composed by Ademar towards the end of his life – that is, in the early 1030s – contains assertions about 'heretics who secretly arise amongst us' which, while consistent with the famous entry in his chronicle *s.a.* 1018 also contain particulars which are not obviously inspired by the Pauline prediction of the last days or standard patristic accounts of Manichaeism. These heretics 'say that nothing comes from communion at the holy altar', 'deny baptism, the cross and the church because they are messengers of Antichrist', reject money, secular honours and marriage. In other words, they repudiate the reassertion of ecclesiastical authority and the manifestations and structures of the social transformation with which it was so closely allied. What else should we expect?

The question remains whether, if there were such false prophets or subversive preachers at work (and, however plausible, we cannot take it as proven by such indirect reports, especially from a writer as imaginative, not to say deranged, as Landes has shown the ageing Ademar to have been) their presence is in any degree attributable to the circulation of apocalyptic or millennial fears and expectations. It will be immediately obvious that the methodological

problems attendant upon both quantitative and qualitative assessment of such
ideas are similar in principle to those relating to heresy, and considerably more
difficult in practice. It is common ground, of course, that the anticipation and
the terror of the Last Judgment were central to Catholic teaching, and that
while any attempt to calculate its date in terms of earthly time was regarded
as potentially a dangerous heresy, the Church's general interests were best
served by the view that it was neither imminent nor impossibly distant.[44]
While there is room for debate as to whether or to what extent in our period
the increasing number and variety of references to the Last Judgment in
documentary sources, diplomatic, narrative and normative, is a function simply
of the increase in the documentation itself, we have only to think of the
tympana of the white cloak of churches which was cast over Western Christen-
dom in these decades to see its centrality in the Church's message at the time.

   Whether the sense of the imminence of the Last Judgment was lent either
greater force or greater precision by the approach of the millennium in the
literal sense, of the years 1000 and 1033, is another question altogether, and
one which confronts us with a classic case of the irresolvable dilemma. From
what is contemptuously referred to as the positivist – its protagonists would
rather say, with what seems arrogance to their opponents, the rational – point
of view, no compelling evidence has been produced that the dramatic events
or the social crisis of the decades around the millennium (supposing either
to have occurred at all, which is certainly not granted by Barthélemy) were
triggered by messiahs prophesying the approach of the millennium. To
Landes this is because ecclesiastical and secular leaders were terrified of the
revolutionary potential of millenarian sentiment, and therefore suppressed or
reinterpreted anything that might stimulate or seem to validate it. Thus, for
example, there is a well-known incident recounted by Abbo of Fleury, when
c. 965 he heard a preacher in Paris say that the Antichrist would appear after
One Thousand Years, and be followed shortly by the Last Judgment.[45] Landes
and Barthélemy agree that this is the orthodox Augustinian view, the thousand
years being equated with the reign of the Christian Church, but for Landes
the fact that it was said and is reported by Abbo with further comments on
the correct interpretation of the relevant passages of Daniel and the apoca-
lypse points to the existence of a literally millenarian opinion which the
sermon was designed to rebut.[46] The unbridgeable chasm between the two
positions is encapsulated by their reading of the famous account by Radulphus
Glaber of how vast crowds of pilgrims set out for Jerusalem in the year 1033:
for Barthélemy 'it is the fact and not the date which catches the attention of
Radulphus Glaber: he does not speak of men and women setting out in
expectation of imminent Judgement, or of the tribulations which will precede
it, or of any "millenarian" sentiment in the widest sense'.[47] For Landes that

is because Glaber wrote the final version in which his text survives *c*.1040, after he knew that the events which he had once anticipated at the Millennium of the Passion did not come to pass. His account therefore represents his attempt to come to terms with his own earlier failure of judgment, which meant reinterpreting events to de-emphasize or even suppress what he had previously thought to be signs of the rapidly approaching End. To understand his hopes or fears at the time of the events in question, therefore, we must reconstruct what with this hindsight he edited out about their causes and significance.[48] To illustrate, Landes reproduces the text with interpolations to indicate what Radulphus was not saying. His reconstruction begins thus, what 'Glaber assumed his readers would understand' being italicized:

> At this time an innumerable multitude of people from the whole world *moved by a belief that the millennium of the Passion would mark the day of the Lord*, greater than any man before could have hoped to see *in his imagination of how the final days would move people*, began to travel to the holy sepulchre of the Saviour in Jerusalem *as Isaiah prophesied about the nations turning to Zion, in order to be present at the mount of Olives, site of the Parousia of Jesus in power and glory.* First the order of the inferior plebs, *it being absolutely extraordinary that the initiative for such a tremendous event should come from the bottom up*, then those of middling estate, and after these the great men, that is kings, counts, marcher lords and bishops, and eventually, and this was unheard of before *a classic apocalyptic trope*, many women, noble and poor, undertook the journey …

and so on.

The problem with both positions is how to control them. Landes's technique (which he calls genealogical, but perhaps archaeological would be a better description) of seeking to track back to the writer's earlier opinions from the traces which they have left in his final text is perfectly reasonable in itself, and each of the particular interpolations he suggests seems quite persuasive in the context of the patterns of thought and usage which Landes and so many others have found in apocalyptic works. But they are not the only readings available. Pilgrimage might be undertaken, even on a large scale, for reasons other than the fear of an approaching apocalypse; and that it involved people of all ranks might be a classic apocalyptic trope, but is also a topos associated with pilgrimage at all times, as well as with other occasions on which normal social distinctions are set aside, such as the funerals of holy men. To describe all such occasions as *ipso facto* apocalyptic would be stretching the term to cover a much wider series of phenomena than seems either useful in itself or compatible with Landes's argument about the extraordinary nature of what was happening in his 'millennial generation'. In short, Landes is in some danger of meeting the fate which overtakes all conspiracy theorists,

of embracing a method which is capable of proving anything and therefore proves nothing. The lack of evidence only demonstrates the lengths to which the authorities have gone to suppress it, thus vindicating both the truth and the potency of the theory. Landes tries to deal with this, certainly, by pointing to cases where an unrecorded millenarianism is being argued against or condemned by implication, but Barthélemy has no great difficulty in suggesting more economical explanations, as in the case of Abbo's preacher, that he was simply dramatizing his call to repentance.

On the other hand, we must not use Occam's razor to cut the branch upon which we sit. If we apply the most rigorous standards of proof to what everyone agrees to be fragmentary and obscure sources, do we not risk missing much that happened, and misunderstanding much of the rest? The question will not be resolved so long as we pose it in these terms. If our choice is between what the texts demonstrably say and what they may plausibly be held to imply there is nothing for either camp to do but reiterate its position and its claim to methodological superiority. Neither, indeed, shows any sign of flagging, but the rest of us may prefer to look for another approach. This, I suggest, may be found by looking not just at what was said, but at what happened, in accordance with the suggestion offered above that any hypothesis as to whether the transformation in Western Europe was revolutionary or evolutionary in nature, might be tested by considering whether the religious changes which took place at the same time are amenable to the same chronology and explanation. The assumption that such a relationship is to be expected, however, places both arguments in some danger of circularity, or at least imposes on both protagonists the obligation to state the order of their reasoning. Since Barthélemy has worked on social and institutional questions for many years without showing much interest (as far as I know) in religion per se, and had attacked *mutationisme* from several points of view before turning his attention to this one, it seems fair to suppose that his scepticism about the revolutionary character of religious events around the millennium arises from the wider concern. He sees this as one of a range of interpretations of various issues – others include the end of ancient slavery and the imposition of serfdom, the emergence of chivalry and so on – each of which falsely asserts sudden change around the millennium in its own particular concern, and thus contributes to a general account of revolutionary change of whose falsity Barthélemy is increasingly convinced, and he has set himself to rebut each strand of the argument in its own terms. On the other hand, when Landes comments, for example, that 'These changes are incomprehensible without attention to the role of this highly volatile, highly powerful apocalyptic discourse', or that 'In the terms of James C. Scott the millenarian is "the most fullthroated of hidden transcripts" whereby those not in power express

their resentment towards those in power'[49] it is not entirely clear whether he is suggesting that the revolution is evidence for millenarianism or that millenarianism is evidence for the revolution. For my own part I see some advantage in starting with the religious question not only because it is the simpler, but also because up to now there has been no substantial attempt, as far as I know, to characterize religious change in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries in the terms of the broader 'evolution or revolution?' debate. It therefore offers, to some degree, an independent check.

To characterize religious change in the period between the late ninth and late twelfth centuries is obviously in itself to risk oversimplification. Nevertheless, what I see resembles Barthélemy's account much more than it does that of Bonnassie, or of Poly and Bournazel. Whether we take the history of monasticism, for example, or of the supersession of monasteries as centres of worship, education and social organization by cathedrals and then by parish churches, or the definition and relative prominence of the sacraments, or the ways in which and the extent to which the Church made increasing demands on the energies, resources and docility of the faithful, everything changed, changed utterly, between the age of Nicholas I and that of Innocent III, but there is no single moment – certainly not around the millennium – at which a sudden or violent rupture is apparent, except to the extent, which on the whole diminishes with the progress of research, to which such changes seem to be associated with the assertion of papal supremacy from the pontificate of Leo IX (1049–54) onwards.

And yet to say that change is gradual and cumulative is not to deny that we may legitimately seek to identify moments at which quantitative change becomes qualitative. However slowly and steadily heat is applied to water, or a salt solution is evaporated, there is a moment at which the water becomes steam, or at which there is no longer enough liquid to absorb the salt and crystals begin to form. The process is continuous, but this moment is important in itself, and the change from liquid to vapour, or from liquid to crystal is a real and objective change, even though it can be neither understood nor properly described except in the context of the long and slow transformation of which it is part. So it is with heresy. There is no doubt that assertions that heresy is current among 'the people' are a marked (even though not very numerous) feature of the early eleventh century, as they had not been of the previous 300 years. Nobody has suggested that this can be accounted for by a change of documentation, and I cannot myself suggest how it might be. The question is what it portends. In the first place, and this is almost a tautology, it registers a change in the minds of those who made the assertions, whom we assume, without much justification (as Wazo of Liège's opposition to the coercion of those suspected of heresy will always remind us)[50] to have

been in this respect more or less typical of holders of ecclesiastical office in general. But to what was the change a response? Their need for more flexible and effective dialectical weapons with which to conduct their arguments among themselves? For that we have quite a lot of direct evidence. An increasing sense of their pastoral responsibilities, producing greater sensitivity to divergences of doctrine and conduct among their charges? For that, little direct evidence, but a certain amount of circumstantial evidence, for example in Gerard of Cambrai's defence of the cult of the dead. The objective reality of organized and conscious popular defiance of ecclesiastical authority in the name of religious teachings that were contrary to those of the Church? For that, very little evidence from what appear to be the obvious sources, and have always been treated as such, but which we have seen on examination to be overwhelmingly reflective of division within the Church, or between the Church and its lay patrons, and not, until the twelfth century, between Church and 'people'.

Yet that is not the whole story. Even supposing, on the basis of this analysis, that the fear of popular heresy was entirely, in the first place, a product of rivalry and tension within the elite, as the fear of sorcery had been at the court of Louis the Pious, or as I suspect the occasional allegations of leprosy which we find at this time to have been,[51] it became sooner or later a real fear. Much the same may be said about millenarianism. Landes has assembled a good deal of evidence that it was thought to be current, and that this thought was alarming not only to Ademar and Radulfus Glaber but, for instance, to the seniors of the scriptorium at St Martial whom he has detected editing Bede's *de ratione temporum* so as to diminish its susceptibility to apocalyptic interpretation.[52] Whether or not this nervousness was justified in either case, it is in itself suggestive at least of some distancing in social relations between the privileged and the unprivileged. It contrasts markedly with the image projected in the reports of the Peace Councils, of Church and People joyously united in resistance to the wicked *milites* – a contrast which is significant in itself, even if, as Barthélemy suspects, that was only image-making. However gradual the social changes which underlay this new suspicion and insecurity may have been, its articulation suggests that we have reached a point where churchmen are becoming conscious that they cannot appeal to popular esteem and support as confidently as once they had. In that case, their fear of heresy must be taken to reflect unease about reactions, actual or potential, to the collection of tithes, the increasing pressure for acceptance of the sacraments and services of the Church, especially the cult of the dead, and the cost of building that mantle of churches of which Radulfus Glaber was so proud, and we admire so much. Richard Landes uncovered a striking example of the last when he showed how Ademar of Chabannes had been at pains in revising

his *Historia* to decouple the disastrous collapse at the dedication of the splendidly rebuilt basilica of St Martial at Limoges in 1018, when fifty people were trampled to death, from his statement that 'heretics appeared in Aquitaine' at that time.[53]

Nervousness about millenarianism presumably indicates a more generalized anxiety about the possibility of social revolt, which is also occasionally hinted at in other ways.[54] It seems likely enough that in the years around 1000 and 1033 people were preaching that the end of the world was nigh. They usually are. There is no reason to suppose that Landes is very far wrong in thinking that they said the kinds of things that would be suggested by the Christian heritage of apocalyptic vocabulary and expectations. How much it mattered is quite another question. Certainly, it is neither necessary nor even plausible to invoke it as an explanation of the harnessing of religious sentiments in the expression of grievance or resistance to the arrogance of power. Whether Radulphus Glaber thought so or not, it was not at all extraordinary to find bottom-up initiatives in religious matters throughout the tenth, eleventh and early twelfth centuries. This is the period when modern research, exploiting the insights of anthropology, has detected a great variety of devices by which people at the mercy of the powerful sought to rally public opinion in their support – by no means always ineffectually – including the humiliation of relics, the pronouncing of elaborate and spectacular maledictions, the enactment of rituals of self-abasement and humiliation by those *begging pardon and favour* of the mighty.[55] It is the period when the people of Western Europe made it a habit to acclaim the miracles performed not only at tombs, but by living saints whom, by proclaiming as such, they invested with the qualities and prerogatives of lordship, sometimes to the embarrassment of those who created the record.[56] Conversely, it had been the habit of bishops and princes, when they had the capacity to assert themselves, to condemn the leaders of the communities which they had it in mind to tame as pagans, idolaters, magicians, rain-makers – and heretics – since the time of the conversions, and would remain so for a long time to come.[57] In this perspective the holy man, the worker of miracles *in vita*, was primarily the spokesman and articulator of a very ancient form of power, that which mobilized the sentiment and values of the community at large to confront its divisions and, where necessary, to bring pressure to bear against its disturbers and oppressors.

It is, in short, quite wrong to imagine that passive acquiescence was the habitual posture of the ordinary people of Western Europe in matters either secular or religious – not, of course, that they perceived a chasm between the two. They were, like the animal in the French zoo, dangerous, and when attacked would defend themselves; their readiness to do so does not require any special explanation. Barthélemy is right to insist against the protagonists

of 'feudal anarchy' around the millennium that we are too easily gulled by the pretensions of rulers and their apologists into accepting at face value the importance of governmental institutions, whether in strength or weakness, and overlooking the self-balancing and self-limiting mechanisms represented by the interests, solidarities and customary sanctions which enabled the community to 'live in conflict',[58] as Patrick Geary and Stephen D. White have described so well.[59]

But if the self-assertion of the community through religious channels and forms of expression was a very ancient form of power, it was also one which was under threat. By the last decades of the twelfth century it had been decisively and permanently marginalized, most directly through the sustained attack on 'heresy' and 'superstition' in the name of 'reason' and true religion which modern historiography associates with the reform of the Church in the eleventh century and the emergence of the modern state in the twelfth.[60] The movements and sentiments described by Cohn were in large part responsive to this marginalization. The first shots in the battle whose sound is still audible to us, though it was joined over smaller issues, are those assertions that heretics were active among the people which first surface in the early years of the eleventh century. Those who feel or express social anxiety are not necessarily, or even probably, the most acute or dispassionate judges of its causes, and collective action by the ruled at their own initiative is always alarming to the rulers, whatever its ostensible nature or objective. They naturally tend to explain opposition to their outlooks and institutions as resulting from the operation of malign forces which must be sternly suppressed – the influence of heretics or subversives, maybe, or travellers from distant lands, or noxious substances. Or even, the approach of the millennium.

Wrestling with the Millennium: Early Modern Catholic Exegesis of Apocalypse 20

Bernard McGinn

The approach of the third millennium of the Christian calendar sparked renewed interest in the history of apocalyptic and millenarian ideas over the past 2,000 years.[1] While some ancient Jewish authors of apocalypses and related literature had looked forward to a period of peace and plenty during the era of the coming messiah,[2] the specification of a 1,000-year time of earthly felicity begins with a brief text in the Christian apocalypse ascribed to John and written probably at the end of the first century CE.[3] The twentieth chapter of this work speaks of the time after the defeat of the beast and the false prophet (Apocalypse 19), when the Devil will be bound for 1,000 years in the pit (Apocalypse 20: 2–3), and the saints who died for their faith will come back to life in the 'first resurrection and reign with Christ for a thousand years' (vv. 4–5). This passage (vv. 1–6) has been one of the most contested in the history of the interpretation of this much-contested book. Is it to be taken literally, or figuratively? Is the 1,000 years an actual millennium of time, or a symbolic number? Will this reign really be on earth?

Many volumes have been written about the history of the millennium and millennial expectations in general. The story is so rich that some important chapters have been neglected. It is one of those that I wish to pursue here. The revival of hope in an earthly millennium (if not always one of a precise 1,000 years) in Protestant Christianity of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is familiar to students of apocalypticism.[4] Roman Catholic polemics against Protestantism, and especially Catholic opposition to Protestant readings of the Apocalypse, have led many to suppose that early modern Catholic interpreters and thinkers avoided all millennial expectations. This was not the case. In the period leading up to the outbreak of the Reformation, as well as during the first century of the quarrel that split Western Christendom,

Catholics adopted a number of attitudes towards Apocalypse 20 and to the possibility of a coming better era on earth. Many of these were explicitly millennial, either in the hope for a chronologically unspecified better age to come, or else even in the belief in a literal 1,000 years. It would take more than a single chapter to study all aspects of Catholic millennialism in the century-and-a-half between *c.* 1475 and 1625. My concentration here will be on exegetical treatments, that is, on those authors who advanced their millennialism within the context of commentaries on the last book of the Bible. Although these learned and often ponderous tomes do not tell the whole story of Catholic millennialism during this time, Jean-Robert Armogathe has justly noted: 'It is these works that set the boundaries and suggested the lines of interpretation that were popularized by intermediaries.'[5] A survey of how early modern Catholic exegetes read chapter 20, as well as some related texts of John's Apocalypse, can provide a prism to view a fascinating and overlooked chapter of the history of millenarianism.

In order to understand what these exegetes did with the millennium of Apocalypse 20, it is necessary to look back, if only briefly, at the thousand years of interpretation previous to them to see how it shaped the options open to these early modern readers. As with so much in the history of Western Christianity, we will begin with Augustine of Hippo.

In his *De civitate Dei* 20.7 (written *c.* 425) Augustine set the weight of his authority firmly against those he called the *miliarii*, who interpreted the account of the first resurrection as prophesying 'that those who will have then arisen shall enjoy huge banquets of meat in which there will be so much food and drink that it not only exceeds moderation, but is also clearly incredible'.[6] The bishop went on to provide two interpretations for the 1,000-year reign of the resurrected saints. The period can be understood either as a synecdoche, signifying the final part of the last of the six ages of world history during which Christ casts the Devil into the abyss of the hearts of the wicked, or else the 1,000 years stands for 'all the years of this world so that the fullness of time might be signified by a perfect number'.[7] Augustine favoured the former view, as he made clear in *De civitate Dei* 20.9 when he identified the earthly church militant with the millennial kingdom. In *De civitate Dei* 20.7, however, he prefaced his remarks with the admission that a view of the millennium 'would be to some extent tolerable [*utcumque tolerabilis*], if these delights in the sabbath destined for the saints were believed to be spiritual through the presence of the Lord', noting that he himself had once held such a view.[8]

More than seven centuries after Augustine expressed his opposition to carnal millennialism, the Calabrian abbot, Joachim of Fiore (*c.* 1135–1202), drove his millennial coach and four through this narrow opening that Augustine had left for a spiritual interpretation of the 1,000-year reign of

Christ and the saints in his massive *Expositio in Apocalypsim* written in the 1190s. Joachim recognized that Augustine was commonly read as opposing all forms of millenarianism, but he felt that this interpretation was mistaken and led to a neglect of future hope for a better state of the Church on earth. Augustine had been right to condemn a *carnal* view of the 1,000 years, but belief in a coming better seventh *aetas* on earth was not an error, but what Joachim called a *serenissimus intellectus*, that is, 'a most exalted understanding'. Joachim held that a good exegete should distinguish three aspects of what was predicted in Apocalypse 20: (1) that there was a coming earthly state, which, contrary to the received Augustinian view, was the clear sense of the text; (2) the duration of this period, which Joachim agreed would not be a literal millennium; and (3) the character of this brief period after the defeat of the Antichrist of this age, which would certainly not be one of a carnal nature, but for Joachim involved the contemplative monastic utopia of the *tertius status*, the third era of the Holy Spirit.[9]

Augustine and Joachim illustrate opposite approaches to the complex mixture of pessimism and optimism about the coming last events of Christian apocalypticism. In the New Testament, pessimistic passages about the last times outnumber optimistic ones, as can be seen by a quick perusal of Jesus's sermon about the End found in the synoptic gospels (Matthew 24: 1–25: 46; Mark 13: 1–37; Luke 21: 5–36), the accounts of the final judgment found in the epistles ascribed to Paul, and most of the Johannine Apocalypse. While the prayer Jesus taught his disciples does contain a petition for the coming of God's kingdom *on earth* (see Matthew 6: 10, Luke 11: 2), it is only in the twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse that we find a description of an earthly kingdom to reward the saints who have suffered in the crisis of this age. Almost from the start, the terrestrial and material (i.e. carnal) nature of this millenarian expectation created problems for a religion that asserted its distinctiveness in large part by insisting on its spiritual superiority to paganism and Judaism. Millennialism has been a bone of contention and even an embarrassment throughout the history of Christianity, but it is a belief that has proven itself very difficult to expunge totally, both because of its place in scripture and also, it seems, because of the way in which it responds to human hopes for the future.

What Augustine called carnal millenarianism was strong in the second century.[10] While not all agreed with Cerinthus (*c.* 130), later condemned as a heretic, who advanced a very 'carnal' view of 1,000 years of immoderate feasting and begetting of children, such orthodox teachers as Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Tertullian all believed in the existence of a coming terrestrial millennium. By about 200 CE, however, mounting opposition to literal millennialism had begun to cast doubt on the canonicity of the

Apocalypse itself. It was only the development of spiritualizing interpretations of the book, especially chapter 20, in the third century that allowed the Apocalypse a place in the canon. Foremost among these interpreters was the great exegete, Origen of Alexandria.[11] Even those who continued to hold to belief in a future 1,000-year reign of Christ and the saints on earth, such as Methodius of Olympus and Victorinus of Pettau, emphasized a less carnal reading of the millennium than had been typical in the second century.[12] Of course, literal, and even carnal, understandings of the millennium were not totally abandoned, as we can see in such fourth-century examples as that of Lactantius in the West,[13] and of Apollinaris of Laodicea in the East. By about 400 CE, however, the tide had definitely turned against a carnal, and even a futurist, interpretation of Apocalypse 20 through the efforts of Augustine, Jerome,[14] and the Donatist exegete Tyconius, who wrote an influential commentary on the last book of the Bible.[15]

The authority of these Fathers of the Church effectively squashed any crudely literal interpretation of the millennium of Apocalypse 20 for much of the next 1,000 years. It also meant that most mainstream apocalypticism of the early Middle Ages, well represented by Pope Gregory I (d. 604), was monotonously pessimistic in its fear of the imminence of Antichrist and the coming of the Doomsday that even the righteous had reason to be nervous about. Nevertheless, if we take millenarianism in a broad sense of hope for *some* period of coming earthly bliss before the end of time, there was millenarianism a-plenty, at least from the eleventh century on. Two basic varieties can be discerned, as the research of Robert E. Lerner and others has shown, though neither was connected to Apocalypse 20 until the time of Joachim.[16] The first of these was the *pre-Antichrist millenarianism* of the Last World Emperor legends. This scenario, found in the *Revelationes* of the Pseudo-Methodius (*c.* 690) and the Latin versions of the *Sibylla Tiburtina* (beginning in the eleventh century), predicts that a final Roman emperor will arise to defeat the Islamic opponents of Christianity and even Gog and Magog (Apocalypse 20: 7–8) and introduce an era which Methodius describes as follows: 'Then the earth will sit in peace and there will be great peace and tranquillity upon the earth such as has never been nor ever will be any more, since it is the final peace at the end of time.'[17] After reigning at Jerusalem for a period that Methodius portrays as relatively brief (e.g. seven-and-a-half years), but that the *Sibylla Tiburtina* describes as lasting 112 years, the emperor voluntarily hands over his crown to God, marking the end of the Roman empire and giving the sign for the coming of Antichrist. After the traditional three-and-a-half-year persecution of the righteous, the Final Enemy is struck down by God and the Last Judgment follows. The Last Emperor legends, later applied first to German medieval emperors, then to national kings, especially of France

and Spain, gave this form of millennialism a considerable role in the later Middle Ages and well into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[18] From the end of the thirteenth century, similar predictions of a final period of peace and plenty and reform of the Church before the onslaught of Antichrist were predicted for a holy pope or popes of the last days, often called *pastores angelici*.[19]

The second form of medieval millenarianism is the *post-Antichrist* variety originating in a discrepancy between two enumerations found in Daniel 12: 11–12. Here the time of 'the Abomination of Desolation' (i.e. the Antichrist) is described as lasting 1,290 days, but Daniel then goes on to say that whoever remains faithful during his persecution will be made blessed after 1,335 days.[20] The first commentator on Daniel, the Greek Father Hippolytus (*c.* 205), solved this problem by identifying the extra forty-five days with a period after Antichrist before the Last Judgment.[21] He was followed by Jerome, and later by Bede and the ninth-century exegete Haimo of Auxerre, who opined (following gospel prohibitions against exact predictions of the End), that the forty-five days should not be interpreted literally, but was a marker for some indefinite brief period after Antichrist. The *Glosa ordinaria* of the twelfth century spoke of this by now canonical time as the *refrigerium sanctorum*. Without in any way equating this exegetical anomaly with the suspect millennium, twelfth-century authors, such as Honorius Augustodunensis (d. *c.* 1156), Otto of Freising (d. 1158), Gerhoh of Reichersberg (d. 1169) and Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179), began to speculate on what kind of reform and betterment this period after Antichrist might bring to the Church.

The 'refreshment of the saints' after Antichrist seems to have had some role in Joachim's revival of millenarianism, but what is significant about the Calabrian abbot's view is that he was the first to link a spiritualizing and non-chronological millennial perspective back to the text of Apocalypse 20. In this, as in much else, Joachim stands out as the foremost Christian millenarian since John of the Apocalypse. The influence exerted by the Calabrian abbot was far-reaching, even if often realized in tortuous and indirect ways. We can say that creeping Joachite millenarianism during the thirteenth and through to the fifteenth centuries moved closer to revived hopes for a literal 1,000-year earthly kingdom, even if it continued to eschew the gustatory and sexual delights of the carnal forms of the early Christian variety. Joachim's most perspicacious reader, the Franciscan theologian Peter John Olivi, composed an important *Lectura super Apocalypsim* in 1297, which agreed with the Calabrian in affirming a proximate contemplative (and for Olivi Franciscan) era of the reformed Church beginning about 1300 as the proper interpretation of Apocalypse 20, but went beyond Joachim in claiming that this spiritual era might last as long as 700 years.[22] (Olivi thus appears to be the first Christian

thinker who thought that the year 2000 would see the end of the world!) The layman Arnold of Villanova, who composed a commentary on the Apocalypse about 1306, also read chapter 20 as predicting an earthly kingdom, in his case of forty-five years' duration.[23]

The widespread millenarianism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, while never 'carnal' in the early Christian sense, grew increasingly terrestrial, political and chronologically millennial. While the full explanation of this shift involves many aspects of late medieval culture, the sad state of the Church, especially during the Avignon period and the Great Schism, led many to think that the only hope for reform and betterment of the Church on earth was through divine intervention at the approach of the End times. The Franciscan prophet, John of Rupescissa (*d.* 1366), was apparently the first person in almost a 'real' millennium to advance the view that the coming age of the purified Church on earth would actually extend for a full 1,000 years – a position he claimed was miraculously revealed to him in 1345.[24] The views of Rupescissa and his followers were a complex mix of *pre-* and *post-Antichrist millenarianism* which incorporated and developed many of the traditions noted above. What is most significant about these thinkers is not so much their tendency to return to a literal chronology of considerable duration, even as much as 1,000 years, but the fact that their agenda for the millennial era was no longer Joachim's contemplative vision of a monastic utopia, but rather a religio-political millennium involving such things as: (1) concrete programmes of church reform; (2) restoration of the Eastern Church to union with Rome; (3) pacification of Italy; (4) conquest of the Holy Land; (5) conversion of the Jews and Saracens; (6) universal disarmament, etc.[25] This political, and literal, view of the millennium was encouraged by the fifteenth-century rediscovery of Lactantius, whose elegant Latinity and millenarianism was influential on a number of apocalyptic propagandists.

In the period *c.* 1475–1520 millennialism flourished, especially south of the Alps and Pyrenees. Renaissance fascination with the classical myth of the returning 'Golden Age' (*aetas aurea*) combined with a broad, if vague, millennial wave of Joachite origin to encourage many forms of hope for a final better time before the End.[26] The preaching of the Dominican friar, Girolamo Savonarola, between 1494 and 1498, is the best known example of this form of millennialism. The fiery reformer identified the purified citizens of Florence as the harbingers of the new age of history, one that continued to inspire his followers for decades after his execution.[27] The sheer proliferation of prophets and treatises in late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento Italy is even more significant.[28] At the same time, the mingling of apocalyptic prophecies with astrological predictions, though not exactly a new phenomenon, reached an unprecedented pitch, both north and south of the Alps.

The confluence of Renaissance millennialism and astrology made its mark on the interpretation of Apocalypse 20, as we can see from the case of Savonarola's fellow Dominican, Annius of Viterbo, also known as Giovanni Nanni (*c.* 1432–1502).[29] Annius is a fascinating character. Although he eventually attained the high office of 'Master of the Sacred Palace' under Pope Alexander VI, he is most famous as a forger. Annius's clever invention and judicious 'editing' of ancient texts, which were published in 1498 under the title *Antiquitates*, sought to show up the Greeks by linking the Etruscans and other races of Western Europe to the most antique and imaginary Near Eastern sources. Paradoxically, the forger was so clever in arguing for his 'authentic' texts that he set the standards for much sixteenth-century critical editing.[30] Annius was also an original exegete of the Apocalypse, as his *De futuris Christianorum triumphis in Saracenos* (also known as the *Glosa sive Expositio in Apocalypsim*), shows. This popular text, first published in 1480 at Genoa, went through seven more printings before 1507, not least because its encouraging message of proximate victory over the dreaded Turk was welcome all over Europe.

In order to grasp Annius's originality as a millenarian exegete, it is helpful to take a brief look at the kinds of Apocalypse exegesis available at the end of the fifteenth century. Early modern commentators on the Apocalypse were heirs to a rich tradition, which, for the sake of convenience, can be described as having three main lines, though these were often intermingled.[31] The first was the Tyconian–Augustinian interpretation, which read the Apocalypse *synchronistically and predictively*, but excluded any future millennium. This view – always the dominant one – was synchronistic in the sense that it interpreted the symbols of the Apocalypse as moral messages about the warfare between good and evil in every age of the Church.[32] Nevertheless, Augustine and his followers never denied that *some* of the events foretold in the book – though certainly not the millennium – would really take place at the end of time (see *De civitate Dei* 20.30), so the Apocalypse did have a predictive element. Joachim of Fiore introduced a second mode of reading the Apocalypse, one which also saw in the book's symbols a spiritual message for every age of the Church (and thus had a *synchronistic* element), but which insisted primarily on a *historicizing and progressivist* approach that saw in the Apocalypse both a detailed account of past history and an accurate prophecy of a dawning better age – the non-carnal, non-literal, but real and earthly millennium of the 'third age of the Holy Spirit' (*tertius status Spiritus Sancti*). In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a new interpretation emerged, the *linear historicist* approach popularized by Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1329). According to this view, the Apocalypse was a literal account of the events of the past history of the Church, but (at least for Lyra) it could not be used to predict the future, especially an earthly millennium.[33]

How Catholic exegetes of the early modern era utilized and transformed this rich tradition and its three strands is a complex story, many chapters of which are only partly known.[34] Annius's *De futuris Christianorum triumphis*, with its combination of astrology and a literal reading of the Apocalypse as a guidebook to the past and future of the Church, shows what the inventive exegete could do with this inherited amalgam.[35]

Annius divided his work into three treatises.[36] In the first (ff. Avr–BVv), following the lead of Nicholas of Lyra, he provides a linear and literal reading of the first fifteen chapters of the Apocalypse as an account of the history of the Church down to his own day. The seven seals (Apocalypse 6: 1–8, 1) speak of seven great early persecutions, while the seven trumpets (8: 2–11, 19) are seven heresies, of which Islam is the last and worst. The fundamental brunt of his argument in this section is that Muhammad is the Antichrist. Even though the founder of Islam has died, he lives on in his persecuting *religio*, just as Christ does in Christianity.[37] The second treatise (ff. BVr–FIIv) treats contemporary history from the time of the capture of Constantinople in 1453 to the end of the world. In this section Annius departs from Lyra by accepting both the pessimistic and the optimistic aspects of Apocalypse 16–22 in literal fashion. The seven bowls of plagues of Apocalypse 16 signify the persecutions and trials that the Turkish followers of Muhammad have been allowed to inflict on Eastern Christians for their heresies and schism from Rome. Chapter 17, with its picture of the punishment of Babylon, signifies the present time when the Turk is persecuting Western Europe (Annius was writing in the aftermath of the sack and slaughter at Otranto in early 1480), but when his power is actually ready to slip.[38] In commenting on this chapter, Annius introduces a scholastic discussion of the full temporal power of the papacy that was later to arouse Luther's ire when he read the Dominican's popular work.[39]

Apocalypse 18–19, according to the Dominican, prophesy the imminent 'first victory' of the Latins, when the pope will establish a new emperor at Constantinople who will defeat the Turks and eventually regain Egypt and Arabia, capturing the 'bones of the accursed Muhammed'. Chapter 20 is to be taken literally as announcing the coming 1,000 years of the triumph of the Church on earth. Here, Annius, joining John's Apocalypse and Lactantius, says that there must be two universal resurrections:

> The first resurrection is of the whole church to universal union under the one pastor Christ. In it the church arises from the death of faith and the misery of error and Saracen oppression to the union of all the churches and victory against the beast and the false prophet. This chapter and Lactantius both speak of this … The second resurrection will be that of bodies.[40]

The ancient chiliasts, Annius concludes, were wrong to think that Apocalypse 20: 5 dealt with a bodily resurrection, but they were correct in holding to a literal 1,000 years of peace before Gog and Magog, the remnants of Islam, will return to attack the Church (see Apocalypse 20: 7–10). Thus, Annius's exegesis of Apocalypse 20 is a new millennial reworking of the literalism of Nicholas of Lyra. Finally, in the third part of his book (ff. FIIIr–FVIIr) he confirms this reading by an 'Astronomical Judgment' (*De iudicio astronomio*), consisting of ten conclusions showing that astrology proves that 'In the year of salvation 1480 the decline of the Turkish Empire will begin and the favor of the Christians will gradually arise and will increase unexpectedly when an emperor of the East has been chosen.'[41]

Annius's treatise is an exegetical example of the flood of millennial prophecy that swept over Italy between *c.* 1475 and 1525, both among the clergy and with wandering male and female seers. Many of the clerical representatives of this Renaissance millenarianism were active at the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–17).[42] The most interesting was Egidio of Viterbo (1469–1532) – humanist, apocalypticist, cabbalist, as well as general of the Augustinians (1507–17), papal preacher, and eventually cardinal.[43] Egidio did not write a commentary on the Apocalypse, and he does not appear to have been heavily influenced by his fellow Viterban, Annius. But it is worth pausing to comment on his form of millenarianism, because of the role it was to play on the Catholic commentators on the Apocalypse in the decades to come. Egidio had an intricate view of salvation history and the coming millennial era, an age which he identified with the twentieth era of history in his major work, the *Historia viginti saeculorum* composed during the Fifth Lateran Council.[44] Egidio's millenarianism is also noteworthy because it incorporated another impetus to hopes for a new age that became important in the Renaissance period – the optimism brought about by the voyages of discovery. In the sermon which he preached before Pope Julius II in 1506, published in the following year under the title *De aurea aetate*, he had already hailed the expansion of world horizons, especially the Portuguese conquests in the Far East, as the fulfilment of scriptural prophecies heralding the imminent Golden Age of world-wide christianization.[45]

The learned cardinal was not the first to hail the voyages of discovery as an apocalyptic sign.[46] It is now common knowledge that Christopher Columbus was deeply millenarian in outlook. The explorer's letters present the discovery of the New World and the opening he thought it presented to a back-door route to the reconquest of Jerusalem as the beginning of the millennial/messianic reign of a Spanish Last World Emperor.[47] Of course, the 'Admiral of the Ocean Seas' was not an exegete. It may also well be, as Adriano Prosperi has claimed, that Columbus's combining of the discovery of the New

World and apocalyptic prophecy was idiosyncratic.[48] Nevertheless, the discovery of America gave new support to the optimistic, millenarian pole of Christian apocalypticism. Not only could true believers enjoy the 'hope-against-hope' that seemingly triumphant Islam–Antichrist had reached his apogee and was ready to go into decline, but they could also rejoice in an unexpected and manifest sign that the millennium was dawning.

This early sixteenth-century optimism, however, was to be challenged in dramatic fashion after 1520 as the major rift in Western Christendom became increasingly evident. The split between Protestant Christianity and what later in the century became 'Tridentine' Roman Catholicism was to have great impact on apocalypticism and millennialism. The 'war over apocalypticism' rapidly became an important element in the struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism.[49] Along with the debates over justification, the sacraments, church governance, and the like, disagreements concerning the Last Things, particularly as focused on the issue of how to read the Apocalypse, were of real importance in the sundering of Christendom.

Martin Luther was apocalyptic in outlook, though his apocalypticism was relentlessly pessimistic, allowing no room for millennial hope.[50] Luther introduced the major theme of subsequent Protestant apocalypticism as he gradually came to the conclusion between 1518 and 1520 that it was not just some particular evil pope who might be seen as Antichrist, or one of his predecessors, but the very institution of the papacy itself which was the Final Enemy.[51] The reformer adhered to a linear-historical reading of the Apocalypse which interpreted the book as a history of the preaching of God's word and the various 'woes' which it encountered.[52] Like Augustine, however, Luther interpreted the 1,000 years of Apocalypse 20: 1–6 not as a future kingdom, but as the reign of God in the hearts of the faithful from the time of John down to the End.

If the original leaders of the Reformation, especially Luther and John Calvin, were not sympathetic to millenarianism, the same cannot be said for their followers. It may be that the very failure of the Reformation to effect a total repristination of Christianity by casting out the papal Antichrist had much to do with the turn to a literal, and sometimes even carnal, understanding of Apocalypse 20. If, as has been suggested, the fulfilment of apocalyptic prophecy in the rise of the Reformation served the Protestants as a rebuttal to the Roman Catholic apologetic based upon the miracles of Catholic saints,[53] then the stalemate between the two competing wings of Western Christianity evident by the second half of the sixteenth century may have encouraged Protestant interpreters to turn towards literal and futurist readings of chapter 20. These 'carnal' hopes were found not just among the radicals and spirituals, where they appeared as early as the 1520s and 1530s

(e.g. Thomas Müntzer, Melchior Hoffman and the Anabaptists of Münster), but also among the descendants of Luther and Calvin by the end of the sixteenth century.[54] Among Protestant thinkers and exegetes, the seventeenth century can be described as a great era of literal millennialism, both among continental Calvinists (e.g. Alsted, Comenius, van Leren, Jurieu) and especially in England (e.g. Brightman, Mede and various radical groups during the Civil War and interregnum).

Even before the outbreak of the Reformation, Catholic apocalypticists had had to confront ecclesiastical opposition to their prophetic views. Disturbed by the popular prophets rife in Italy in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the Fifth Lateran Council in its 1516 decree *Supernae majestatis praesidio* forbade preachers from announcing precise dates for Doomsday on the basis of scripture, though it did allow for the possibility of revelations about the End sent from God.[55] With regard to the millennium, the Reformation attack on the papacy as Antichrist and papal Rome as Babylon that became ever stronger after 1520 made it increasingly difficult for Catholics, especially commentators on the Johannine Apocalypse, to depart from the traditional Augustinian reading of chapter 20 which identified the millennium with the historical, papally-governed Church of Rome.[56] Catholic commentary on the Apocalypse in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, therefore, had a strong reactive component, though this did not prevent it from taking new slants on old motifs, including the millennium. The Catholic commentators were not as bold in their millenarian hopes as some of the more suspect prophets and propagandists of future betterment, like Guillaume Postel (d. 1581). Nevertheless, it is instructive to see what the exegetes of the century between 1525–1625 did with the text of Apocalypse 20, a true *crux interpretationis* if there ever was one.

The millenarianism found among many Catholic thinkers in early sixteenth-century Italy did not immediately expire, either in the crisis of the outbreak of the Reformation or in the fires of the apocalyptic sack of Rome in 1527.[57] One of the apocalypticists active at the Fifth Lateran Council, the Franciscan Pietro Galatino (1460–*c.* 1540), composed a *Commentaria in Apocalypsim* not long before 1524. This work, which remains in manuscript among the mass of treatises the friar left to the library at the convent of Ara Coeli in Rome, shows that late medieval forms of Joachite expectation of a millennial period soon to be initiated by the *pastor angelicus* were alive and well in the 1520s.[58] The friar was deeply imbued with Joachim's exegetical principles, but he differs from the Calabrian in placing the imminent Golden Age of the Church, not in the seventh, but in the sixth age, 'whose beginning we now are grasping'.[59] Galatino's primary concern was not so much with the millennium itself, as with the cooperation of a Last World Emperor (Charles V was his

candidate) and the *pastor angelicus* in ushering in the new age. (Galatinus came to identify himself as the Holy Pope of the dawning millennial era.)

On the basis of a study of some of the most widely disseminated commentaries on the Apocalypse during the period from *c.* 1525 to *c.* 1625, we can see that millennialism remained a force in Tridentine Catholic readings of the book until the end of the sixteenth century.[60] Two good examples from the mid-sixteenth century can be found in commentaries of Serafino of Fermo (1496–1540) and Coelius Pannonius (active 1530s–40s).[61]

Serafino was a canon of St John Lateran active in northern Italian Catholic reforming circles and a popular spiritual writer. His *Breve dichiaratione sopra l'Apocalisse di Giovanni*, first published in Milan in 1538, enjoyed other editions in Italian (1556, 1569 and 1581) and also appeared in Latin in 1570.[62] Serafino was endebted to Joachim and to the Franciscan Spirituals, especially Ubertino da Casale (a follower of Olivi), in structuring his commentary along the lines of the Joachite seven ages of the Church.[63] He saw his own time as the fifth age, which was witnessing signs of the approaching sixth age of Antichrist in the rise of the Reformation (*Breve dichiaratione*, ff. 306v–307r). Luther, the precursor of Antichrist, is identified with the star who falls from heaven and opens up the abyss (Apocalypse 9: 1–2; cf. *Breve dichiaratione*, f. 311r); he is also the beast from the land of Apocalypse 13:11 (ff. 324r–325r). Serafino asserts that the signs of the imminence of Antichrist, including the discovery of America, are far more sure in his day than they had been in Joachim's time (f. 325rv). Nevertheless, Serafino is not totally pessimistic. He expects an age of millennial peace after the destruction of Antichrist predicted in Apocalypse 17–18.

True to his recapitulative strategy, Serafino sees the message of coming peace predicted throughout the Apocalypse in passages like the half-hour silence in heaven of Apocalypse 8: 1 (f. 309r), in the defeat of the dragon in chapter 12 (ff. 321v–322v), and throughout chapter 19 (ff. 335r–336v). When he gets to Apocalypse 20 he finds the most convincing proof. Citing Augustine (!) that the predicted millennium must be the last 1,000 years of history, Serafino says that if 4,000 years are allotted to the Old Testament, and 2,000 to the New, then the final millennium still has 500 years to go, leaving ample time for a long period of peace and universal conversion.[64] But for the Lateran canon, even this 500 years does not mark the end of earthly time. After the release of Gog and Magog and the battle that destroys them (Apocalypse 20: 7–10), the descent of the Heavenly Jerusalem and the new heaven and earth predicted in Apocalypse 21, he argues, must be taken for a second millennial time 'of the renewed church on earth, to which all nations come, having the twelve tribes of Israel, as are clearly named here' (see Apocalypse 21: 12).[65] Serafino, then, was no less millennial in outlook than

Annius had been sixty years before, though he arrives at his millennialism by a different mode of exegesis, an essentially Joachite one.

The Hungarian cleric who styled himself Coelius Pannonius was rector of the community of Hermits of St Paul at San Stefano in Monte Coelio in Rome (today usually called San Stefano Rotondo). He was also another convinced millenarian. Coelius (also known as Francesco Gregorio) put together a rich collection of materials on the Apocalypse from commentators old and new. First published at Venice in 1541 under the title *Collectanea in sacram Apocalypsin*, it enjoyed subsequent printings in 1547, 1571 and as late as 1682. Like Joachim (though with a slightly different breakdown of chapters and verses), Coelius divides the Apocalypse into seven recapitulative visions corresponding to the seven ages of the Church.[66] Like Serafino, the Hungarian cleric is a firm believer in a coming earthly millennial period after Antichrist's defeat falling into two stages – the first announced in Apocalypse 20: 1–6, and the second after the defeat of Gog and Magog.[67] Concerning 'that golden and lovely age' (*aureum illud et amabile saeculum*, f. 178v) he says in his Preface:

> The seventh time is that of the Sabbath, that is, of quiet and general peace, in which the church will be reborn as if rising from the dead after the destruction of the Great Antichrist, when all Israel will be saved. And even if it will be disturbed through Gog and Magog, still that disturbance will be brief, when the former Golden Age returns. After that time will be no more.[68]

The details of Coelius's rich exegesis, one of the most relentlessly recapitulative of all Apocalypse readings, cannot delay us here. His approach is Joachite in its willingness to use the images of the Apocalypse to locate precise moments in the history of the Church, including the disastrous defeat of the Hungarian forces by the Turks in 1526, which he sees predicted as part of the Seven-Headed Dragon's war against the 'woman's seed' (Apocalypse 12: 7).[69] It is his hopes for the millennium that are our primary concern. They are among the most detailed of the Catholic sixteenth century, comprising many of the themes from Joachite millennialism, such as coming orders of *viri spirituales* and a *pastor angelicus*,[70] with the distinctive early modern accents of world-wide preaching of Christianity in the light of the new geographical discoveries (see ff. 127v–128v and 257v–259r). Like Annius and Serafino, Coelius looks forward to the conversion of the Jews in the new age (see ff. 118v, 292v, 305r). Although he is cautious about specifying the length of the coming era of total felicity, the Hungarian's millennial era is not the brief *refrigerium sanctorum* of some early medieval hopes.[71] In one place at least, like Serafino, he held that Christ's coming (or more specifically, his baptism) took place four millennia after the creation of the world, signifying that there are a good 500

years of felicity left before the end (f. 198r). Even more than Annius and other Renaissance commentators, Coelius heralds the dawning millennium in the language of the classical *aetas aurea*. In commenting on Apocalypse 20, he puts it as follows:

> In this matter we hold only this for certain, that the future kingdom of the church will be a totally happy one. The briefest time of it will be counted for the longest merit when the devout will exult and rejoice with incredible joy both over Antichrist's destruction and their own peace, and especially Christ's glory … What will then take place will silence all things in beautiful tranquillity. The days will then be more fortunate in their course; the sun will shine more pleasantly with its playful rays; heaven will not roar with thunder, nor will the lightning bolts of an angry God be launched. In those days dew and rain will fecundate the earth with more abundant downpour; the stars will smile as they rise … What more? Then, the Golden Age returns.[72]

Virgil meets the Apocalypse through the mediation of Joachim.

How did later Catholic exegetes regard the millenarianism of Annius, Serafino and Coelius? Without trying to survey all the Catholic commentators on the Apocalypse, a brief examination of some of the most popular commentaries in the period up to *c.* 1625 will help us to respond to this question. The survey shows that moderate millennialism remained an option up to about 1600, but that any form of earthly hope of a better age before the end of time rapidly became unpopular among Catholic exegetes in the seventeenth century.

Gaspar Melo was a Spanish Augustinian who published a massive, 1,000-page *Commentaria in Apocalypsin* in Valladolid in 1589.[73] Melo knew Greek and some Hebrew and had a wide acquaintance with patristic and medieval commentaries, including Joachim of Fiore.[74] He occasionally attacks Luther and Protestant positions (e.g. *Commentaria*, pp. 274, 784 ff.), but his main interest is in summarizing and harmonizing the patristic and medieval past to give a consistent moral reading of a basically Tyconian–Augustinian variety.[75] The Augustinian friar generally resists any historicizing of the symbols of the Apocalypse that would link them to events of the past or present,[76] though, of course, he recognizes that much of the book also tells of what will happen at the end of time, such as the persecution of Antichrist.[77]

Melo's attitude towards millenarian hopes, however, displays ambivalence. Given the disagreements among earlier expositors about so much that pertains to the Apocalypse, he often cites a number of positions, sometimes leaving the reader to make a decision, at other times arguing for his own preference. A good example of this procedure can be found in his comments on Apocalypse 8: 1: 'When the seventh seal had been opened there was silence in heaven for about a half hour.' Bede was the first exegete to identify this half-

hour with the forty-five-day mini-millennium of the time after Antichrist,[78] and we have seen other exegetes follow suit. Melo presents this view (mentioning Bede, Rupert and 'some of the minor commentators'), but then argues against it, saying: 'This exposition which says that the half-hour silence signifies the time from Antichrist's death until judgment does not please me' (*Collectanea*, pp. 328–30). He interprets the silence in heaven as that of the angels and saints over the magnitude of the sufferings to be revealed at the opening of the seventh seal. Thus, the Spanish Augustinian was clearly opposed to one well-established form of millennialism, the tradition of the *refrigerium sanctorum* of the forty-five days after Antichrist's destruction.

When we turn to Melo's comments on Apocalypse 20: 1–6, however, the picture becomes more complex. Melo gives two explanations of the descent of the strong angel who binds Satan for 1,000 years (*Collectanea*, pp. 767–75). The first is the traditional view of Augustine and Gregory that the angel is Christ who at his incarnation binds Satan, so that the 1,000 years signifies 'the whole time of the evangelical law until the time of Antichrist' (p. 772). However, he then goes on to give a second meaning which relates the whole 'to the peace of the church after the death and destruction of Antichrist, as Coelius expounds'.[79] Melo discusses errors regarding the 1,000 years of the *regnum electorum*, beginning with the traditional carnal understanding of Cerinthus and others, which he says conflicts with the spiritual view of Christianity set forth especially by Paul (p. 774). Subsequently, in commenting on the first resurrection (Apocalypse 20: 4b–6, on pp. 775–84), he attacks another error, namely, the view that the martyrs will physically come back to life before Judgment Day. No, he insists, the *prima resurrectio* 'pertains to the grace and glory of souls', that is, it signifies both the resurrection from sin through the grace of baptism (the traditional interpretation of Augustine) and the existence of the souls of the just in heavenly glory (pp. 779–83). The 1,000 years, i.e. the *longum tempus*, that the just reign with Christ in heaven, however, does not conflict with belief in 'the Golden Age after the destruction of Antichrist, according to the opinion of Coelius and others' (p. 780). Hence, Melo does allow a non-carnal, 'Golden Age' understanding of the millennium as a possible interpretation of Apocalypse 20. When we turn to the summary he gives at the end of the chapter (each chapter in the *Collectanea* concludes with an *intelligentia capitis*) we find, surprisingly, that it is the millenarian and not the traditional reading that is summarized (pp. 812–13). The Spanish Augustinian, while no Joachite, was clearly a Renaissance millenarian.

Such moderate forms of millennialism, however, were growing increasingly problematic by the end of the sixteenth century as a phalanx of Jesuit commentators geared up their attack on Protestant interpretations of the Apocalypse as the history of the papal Antichrist. Melo published his com-

mentary during the very years that Robert Bellarmine was putting out his *Disputationes contra Haereticos* (1586–93), which contain a sustained rebuttal of Protestant identification of the papacy with the biblical Antichrist.[80] Bellarmine made use of the commentary of the Portuguese Jesuit, Francisco de Ribeira (1537–91), entitled *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, which had been written about 1580, but not published until 1591 at Salamanca.[81] Ribeira was the pioneer of a new form of reading the Apocalypse, a literal futurist one that split the Apocalypse into two parts: an account of the early days of the Church contained in Apocalypse 1–3; and the rest of the book which describes *only* the events of the End of time, not those of the course of church history.[82] Ribeira's learning and sober approach to the problems of the Apocalypse and the vagaries of its commentators led Wilhelm Bousset to characterize him and his followers as composing 'the first commentaries to which one can in some sense ascribe scientific worth'.[83] Needless to say, the Jesuit had little use for anything smacking of millenarianism, literal or revised.

Ribeira devotes a substantial discussion to Apocalypse 20.[84] He begins by describing the chapter as *perobscurum* (p. 373), perhaps because it compelled him to abandon his usual insistence on the futurist nature of most of John's revelation. The Jesuit's exegesis of the millennium is a strict reprisal of Augustinian opposition to literal millennialism,[85] but the peculiarities of chapter 20 do force him to split his exegesis of the passage into two parts: a preterite reading of 20: 1–6, which interprets the millennium as the whole time of the Church, and a futurist reading of the remainder of the chapter as signifying the release of Antichrist three-and-a-half years before the end. At the outset of his reading, Ribeira admits that *prophetia* has a relation to all times in so far as it reveals things that happened at one time whose meaning is made known only subsequently, but the point of his long disquisition is to show that millenarian views of the first verses of Apocalpse 20 constitute a *lapis offensionis* (p. 380).

Ribeira's interpretation was scarcely original, though the details of his reading merit consideration as typical of the way in which sixteenth-century Catholic exegetes, even those opposed to millennialism, continued to wrestle with the meaning of Apocalypse 20. For example, Ribeira denies that the angel who descends to bind Satan is Christ, insisting rather that it is Michael who serves as God's agent when Christ breaks the Devil's power over humanity through his Passion and Resurrection (pp. 373–8). When he comes to verse 4 about the thrones that will be set up for the saints, he notes: 'This passage is very obscure and it seems in large measure to overturn everything that has been said thus far' (pp. 378–9). The Jesuit disagrees with Augustine's view that the passage can be applied to the earthly rulers of the Church (i.e. the bishops), insisting, like Melo, that it pertains to the saints who reign with

Christ in heaven. In the midst of his long treatment of this verse, Ribeira includes a refutation of all forms of millenarianism, both patristic and contemporary ones, which he says arise 'from a depraved understanding of the apostolic words' (*ex depravata verborum Apostolicorum intelligentia*; p. 384). Therefore, 'The thousand years are to be understood as stretching until the end of the world, and it can in no way be said that the saints of that last age will reign for a thousand years until the end of the same age.'[86] The millennium (which is nothing but a symbol for a lengthy period as used throughout the Bible) ends with the coming of Antichrist, an event that Ribeira holds is well in the future, whenever it will come to pass.[87]

Francisco de Ribeira's dismissal of millennialism and his emphasis on providing a literal reading of the Apocalypse of an essentially futurist sort should not be taken to indicate that all Jesuit exegetes were immune to millennial infections. As Marjorie Reeves has shown, the predictions of Joachim and his followers about coming orders of *viri spirituales* were enticing to a number of learned Jesuits, including some of the exegetes of the Apocalypse.[88] An example can be found in the case of Blasius Viegas (1554–99), another Portuguese member of the order, whose popular *Commentarii Exegetici in Apocalypsim* first appeared in 1601.[89] Viegas's commentary was even longer and more learned than that of Gaspar Melo. If Melo was a traditionalist in presenting a generally moral reading of an Augustinian type, Viegas, like Ribeira, was primarily interested in undercutting Protestant exegesis by showing that most of the Apocalypse dealt with the events of the End of time. Nevertheless, he was willing to open the door, at least a crack, to some historicizing interpretations that dealt with present events. For example, he defended Joachim of Fiore's reputation as a prophet, noting that Joachim's comments on the Angel of Philadelphia (Apocalypse 3: 7–13) might be applied by some commentators to the rise of the Jesuit order – though he himself modestly refrained from defending the view.[90] Viegas was also willing to entertain a modest form of traditional millenarianism. In his brief remarks on Apocalypse 20: 1–6, to be sure, he excludes any millennial view of these verses, citing the usual passages from Augustine's *De civitate Dei*.[91] Like Ribeira, he also denied that the half-hour silence in heaven of Apocalypse 8: 1 signifies the forty-five days of the *refrigerium sanctorum* after Antichrist.[92] But, in the treatise on Antichrist that he included in his comments on Apocalypse 13, Viegas did admit that there would be a period of peace and tranquillity *after* the demise of the Final Enemy, and one of a probable long duration: 'It is not likely that in as brief a period as forty-five days after Antichrist's death people would be able to shake off the memory of such a great persecution so that they could live in the security, leisure, and delights that recall those of the time before the flood.'[93]

Another Jesuit, one who was was even more favourable to Joachim, adopted a similar perspective. Benito Pereyra (*c.* 1535–1616) published his *Disputationes super libro Apocalypsis* in Lyon in 1606. Marjorie Reeves has shown how this commentator drew on Joachim's thought to a considerable extent, utilizing the abbot's distinction of seven ages of the history of the Church. Like Serafino of Fermo, he saw his own era as that of the fifth age, and for him this was the era specially set aside for the Jesuits.[94] Unlike Ribeira and Viegas, he was willing to interpret Apocalypse 8: 1 as referring to a period of universal evangelization after the death of Antichrist, and apparently one of some duration.[95] But when he gets to Apocalypse 20, Pereyra follows the by-now general line in refraining from reading Apocalypse 20 in a millennial sense.

With Benito Pereyra we have crossed the divide between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. As the seventeenth century progressed, Catholic opposition to any millenarian understanding of Apocalypse 20 became more and more evident. The massive intellectual effort of the Jesuits to counter the Protestant understanding of John's Apocalypse as teaching the identification of the papacy with the Antichrist, as well as the growing millennialism among Reformed and Puritan Protestants, made millennialism more and more suspect among Catholics.

The exegete who set much of the agenda for the Catholic interpretation of the Apocalypse in the seventeenth century was the Jesuit, Luis Alcasar (1554–1613), whose *Vestigatio arcani sensus in Apocalypsi* first appeared post-humously in Antwerp in 1614 and was immediately recognized as one of the most 'modern' interpretations of John's mysterious revelation.[96] Alcasar broke with earlier Jesuits in stressing a preterite and historical reading that held that everything in the Apocalypse, with the exception of the last three chapters, had been fulfilled in the early centuries of the Church. Although he noted that a number of early commentators had taught that Apocalypse 20 referred to the *refrigerium sanctorum* after Antichrist, Alcasar had no sympathy for this view. He also launched an attack on Joachim of Fiore, saying, 'He who will may hold the Abbot Joachim to be a prophet of God, but not I.'[97]

None of the major Catholic exegetes of the Apocalypse during the later seventeenth century was favourable to the interpretation of Apocalypse 20 as referring to a coming better age of the Church. Cornelius a Lapide, or Van den Steen (1567–1637), was the most prolific Jesuit exegete of the era. A Lapide's Apocalypse commentary first appeared in 1627,[98] the same year that the Protestant divine Johann Heinrich Alsted issued his millenarian work, the *Diatribe de mille annis Apocalypticis*. A Lapide knew Alcasar's novel historicist reading of the Apocalypse, though he considered it untraditional and suspect because 'it makes history out of prophecy'.[99] He preferred to follow Ribera, Viegas, and such older Tyconian interpreters as Rupert of Deutz, in his

description of the divisions of the book and the meaning of its images.[100] Cornelius a Lapide was familiar with Joachim and his followers, citing Ubertino, Galatinus, Serafino and Coelius Pannonius. He also knew Annius of Viterbo. Although, as Marjorie Reeves has noted, he cites Joachite notions of the coming *viri spirituales* that some of his confreres saw realized in the Jesuit order,[101] this did not lead him to a favourable attitude to Joachim's prophetic exegesis. 'His prophecies are rather dreams and deliriums,' says the Jesuit in his preface.[102] When the Flemish Jesuit interprets Apocalypse 20 he rigorously hews to the traditional Augustinian reading, outlawing all forms of millenarian hope.[103]

The anti-millenarian line dominated the Catholic tradition for the remainder of the century. What is perhaps the most massive of all the Catholic commentaries on the last book of the Bible, the *Commentaria in Apocalypsim* of the Portuguese Carmelite Iohannes Sylveira (1592–1687), published in 1663, takes a strong line against millennialism.[104] The most influential attack, however, came in the *L'Apocalypse avec une explication* of Jacques-Benigne Bossuet (1627–1704), the dominant French Catholic thinker of the era.[105] In this 1689 work Bossuet answered the Protestant millenarian Pierre Jurieu by adopting a strong historical stance towards the Apocalypse, arguing that the book deals with the early Church and its struggles against the Jews and Roman persecution. Citing Augustine, Bossuet says that the view that chapter 20 predicts a literal coming millennium is 'unsustainable', and he accuses the Protestant millenarians of that most ancient of false forms of exegesis, 'judaizing'.[106]

We cannot follow the history of Catholic views for and against the millennium further. This partial survey shows, however, that an important turning point was reached around 1600. Before that date millenarian readings of Apocalypse 20: 1–6 and related passages in John's revelation were possible among Catholic exegetes. After it they were generally ruled out. The reasons for this shift are many. The two most powerful appear to come first from tradition – the Tyconian–Augustinian line of interpretation that had always reacted against hopes for a future millennium – and second from the contemporary situation in which many Protestant exegetes were turning to readings of a literal millenarian sort. The ongoing exegetical debates between Protestants and Catholics had, as Jean-Robert Armogathe has suggested, imposed a growing interpretive literalism that had driven out the rich mix of multiple senses of scripture which had encouraged a variety of ways of reading the Apocalypse, including those open to millenarianism.[107]

This is not to say that millenarianism completely vanished from Roman Catholicism, though it would rarely surface in Apocalypse exegesis. Millenarianism is varied enough in form and powerful enough in the hope it bestows

to prove difficult to eradicate totally. Nevertheless, the history of Catholic hopes for a coming millennium, literal or spiritual, had much less to do with Apocalypse 20 after 1600 than before that date. At the time of writing, this situation was evident even in the twentieth century, as we approached the end of the millennium that thinkers like Olivi, Serafino of Fermo and Coelius Pannonius thought would mark the conclusion of the 6,000-year course of history. Continuing Catholic opposition to any hint of literal, or carnal, millenarianism can be seen in the condemnation by the Holy Office on 21 July 1944, of what it called 'Mitigated Millenarianism' (*systema Millenarismi mitigati*), that is, the view that Christ would visibly appear on earth before the End.[108] But are there Catholic millenarians of a more spiritual sort? One has only to read Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* to see that a form of spiritualized millenarianism is alive and well in Roman Catholicism.[109] Although the pope explicitly said that his emphasis on the Great Jubilee Year was 'not a matter of indulging in a new millenarianism', nevertheless, in making preparation for the Year 2000 a 'hermeneutical key' of his pontificate,[110] he clearly tapped into the age-old hopes for a coming age of the 'resurrection' of the saints on earth first announced in the twentieth chapter of John's Apocalypse.

Deciphering the Cosmos from Creation to Apocalypse: The Hurufiyya Movement and Medieval Islamic Esotericism

Shahzad Bashir

Why be afraid of death when you have the essence of eternity?
Where in the grave can you be contained when you have the light of god?

Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273)[1]

Around the year 1357, a wandering dervish's recitation of these verses fell upon the ears of a young man of about seventeen sitting in a religious college in Astarabad, Iran. Already given to religious pursuits, Fazlallah Astarabadi was exceedingly affected by the great mystical poet's message of parity between divinity and humanity and sought an explanation for the verse from his teacher in religious sciences. The latter replied that it reflected a sentiment produced from acquiring the goals of mystical exercises. As such, its meaning was beyond ordinary words and could be understood only by pursuing extreme piety and appropriate knowledge. Over the course of the following year, Fazlallah systematically decreased his interaction with the material world by withdrawing from social contact, fasting constantly, and spending all his time in prayer. By the end of the year, he was overtaken completely by mystical desire which led him to renounce all his belongings as well as family connections and don the coarse felt garment (*namad*) of a wandering mendicant in preparation for a journey to Mecca on foot to perform the hajj.[2] In due course, he became renowned among both elites and popular classes for his knowledge and mystical aptitude, and the strength of his influence and the general tenor of his teachings roused apprehension in the conqueror Timur (d. 1405). Condemned to death on grounds of heresy, he was imprisoned briefly and then allegedly beheaded personally by Timur's son Miranshah (d. 1408) in 1394.[3] His movement, termed 'Hurufiyya' by this time due to

Fazlallah's apparent emphasis on the letters of the Arabo-Persian alphabet (*huruf*), was inherited by a number of talented disciples and continued to be a substantial presence on the religious scene (with occasional political involvement) over the next century.

Anchored in Fazlallah's status as the recipient of an extraordinary revelation, the story of the Hurufiyya replicates a pattern common in the history of millennialist religion. Fazlallah's personal sense of his mission stemmed from the general prophetological principle that the preordained time-line of the cosmos is punctuated by the births of chosen individuals entrusted with divine revelations. He and his followers thought of him as the initiator of a new religious dispensation in which the esoteric plan of the universe, alluded to symbolically in the teachings of earlier religions, had become explicit. The Hurufis' greatest achievement was to generate a sophisticated religious system, including both theoretical speculation and distinct rituals derived from normative Islamic practices, in a period of less than half a century. As befitted the revelation of ultimate cosmic mystery, the movement's followers anxiously awaited an imminent apocalypse and its corollaries like the day of judgment and eternal life in heaven and hell promised in previous scriptures. At first postponed and re-theorized over the course of the fifteenth century, the Hurufis' millennialist impulse eventually vanished along with their new rituals when Islamic history took its next turn with the establishment of the great empires in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. However, the movement's intellectual legacy was incorporated into other movements and mystical orders to survive to the modern period.

The lasting power of the theoretical side of Hurufism is attributable in great part to the fact that it derived its fundamental principles from strains of religious thought going back to the early Islamic or even pre-Islamic period. Fazlallah Astarabadi was a late medieval representative of an Islamic strand which combined mystical, messianic and sectarian ideas to generate zealous religious outlooks with political potential. Noticeable first in the milieu of the Shi'i imams in early Islamic history, proponents of this viewpoint saw themselves as bearers of a greater religious knowledge, usually emphasizing alternative interpretations of Islamic cosmogony and religious mythology, which could not be divulged publicly in the immediate present.[4] This basic principle, which I will refer to as 'Islamic esotericism' in the present chapter, divided the Muslim community into those satisfied with the apparent aspects (*zahir*) of things and others who considered surface appearances mere pointers to the far more significant inner or esoteric (*batin*) reality. This perspective later found its most widespread application in the development of Sufism which both stipulated systematic ways of explaining, acquiring and utilizing esoteric knowledge, and detailed its associated benefits and obligations.

However, for Sufis through the ages, the knowledge was generally revealed only as a result of intense personal endeavour undertaken under the supervision of a mystical guide. The knowledge was thus available to all who were willing to expend the effort, and those successful on the path constituted a hierarchy of saints whose presence in the world guaranteed its existence.[5]

In contrast with Sufism, a version of Islamic esoteric thought which emphasized the a priori personal authority of one who was endowed with such knowledge became the underpinning of Shi'ism. The various Shi'i sects believed that the infallible persons they proclaimed their imams had total access to the unseen world. They were, in fact, the only individuals to appreciate the full measure of things apprehended on the surface in the material sphere.[6] Under dominant juridical Shi'i traditions such as Fatimid Isma'ilism and Twelver jurisprudence, the power of the imam's personal knowledge was channelled into systematic applications of legal procedures. The ultimate open revelation of the knowledge was, consequently, either purported to have already taken place (such as in the proclamation of the Fatimid caliphate), or postponed to an indefinite future (foundational belief in Twelver Shi'ism). In both cases, actual religious authority came to rest in the hands of classes of jurists who regarded themselves as the imam's agents.[7]

Against the institutionalized traditions, some minority Shi'i groups retained their intense focus on an imminent final revelation of cosmic mystery through the rise of an imam who would lead the group to religious as well as political triumph. The rhetorical appeal of such groups came from combining a strident sectarian identity with a rationalized and well-articulated discourse about esoteric knowledge. Under favourable socio-historical circumstances, the revolutionary potential of this ideology came out into the open in the form of movements either preparing in earnest for the imam or led by self-proclaimed pretenders. In both cases, the imam's appearance was to be followed by moral and military victory on a universal scale and the eventual apocalyptic dissolution of the universe.

By the eleventh century, the Nizari Isma'ili branch of Shi'ism in Persia and Syria (sometimes called the sect of the Assassins) was the greatest representative of the radical esoteric tradition in the eastern Islamic world. It was able to maintain its revolutionary fervour between approximately 1090 and 1256, a period whose apex came in the form of a Resurrection (*qiyama*) convened in 1164.[8] At this event, the reigning overlord of the Nizari fortress at Alamut abrogated Islamic law, declared that he himself was the imam, and told his followers that, from this moment forward, they were in heaven and their enemies had been consigned to hell. Instead of their literal meanings, the everlasting reward and punishment promised in the Qur'an were to be understood as figurative descriptions of states of knowledge and ignorance.

This ideology underwent cycles of reinterpretation in subsequent Nizari history, though the development of the tradition as a whole was curtailed severely when the Mongols carried out a total destruction of Nizari political power in the thirteenth century. Nizari Isma'ilism lost its dynamism for a number of centuries following this calamity and ceased for ever to be a viable alternative to Sunni (and later Twelver Shi'i) hegemony in central Iranian lands.[9]

In opposition to its effect on the coherence of Nizari tradition, the breaking down of Nizari communities in the thirteenth century allowed the intellectual tradition to dissipate and become absorbed into the society at large. Combined with both the immense popularity of Sufism in the period and the disruption of social and cultural life under successive Turko-Mongol invasions, the Nizari legacy and other less prominent radical traditions became intellectual progenitors of the Hurufiyya and other messianic movements which gained prominence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the Islamic East.[10] Echoing earlier Sufi as well as Twelver, Nizari Isma'ili and Ghulat Shi'i motifs, the Hurufis were thus a part of the trend which also included the Shaykhiyya of Sarbadar domains, Musha'sha'iyya, Nurbakhshiyya and the Safavid Sufi order in its transformed state in the second half of the fifteenth century. Contextualized in their historical setting, therefore, Fazlallah Astarabadi and his Hurufi followers represented the socio-intellectual environment of their times.

My aim in the present chapter is to present Hurufi history and religious theory as an example of the esoteric strand in medieval Islamic millennialism. In particular, the intellectual side of the movement, available from a whole array of voluminous works by Fazlallah himself and his disciples, has so far not received adequate academic attention.[11] The chapter is divided into three parts: the circumstances of Fazlallah Astarabadi's life and death; an understanding of the Hurufi religious worldview; and the fate of Hurufism in the history of the Islamic East following Fazlallah's execution. A complete appraisal of materials relevant for the study of Hurufism is beyond the scope of a single essay, and my principal aim here is to outline the historical and philosophical universes the Hurufis inhabited and promoted. In addition, the discussion serves to highlight the role of messianic and esoteric traditions in the development of Islamic intellectual history.

Fazlallah Astarabadi (*c.* 1340–96)

According to the traditional Hurufi biography, Fazlallah Astarabadi was born in the year 740 AH (1339–40 CE) in a family tracing its lineage to the seventh Shi'i Imam Musa al-Kazim.[12] In one source, his father was the grand judge

(*qazi al-quzat*) in Astarabad, a city on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, and Fazlallah inherited the office as a child upon his father's death. His father's lieutenants continued to tend to judicial business during Fazlallah's traditional schooling which was eventually to render him capable of personally occupying the office. In 1357, at around the age of seventeen, Fazlallah heard the verse by Rumi with which I began this chapter and gradually severed all connections with the material world. His journey towards the realization of his special religious gift and mission then commenced with his decision to travel to Mecca.

Fazlallah's aptitude for mystical apprehension was confirmed first through momentous dreams seen soon after the experience of conversion.[13] Following the hajj in 1358, he made his way to Khwarazm and then decided to set off for the pilgrimage once again. However, an apparition of the Shi'i Imam Musa al-Rida appeared to him while passing through Fars and directed him towards his grave in Mashhad instead. He resumed his journey to Mecca after spending some time in Mashhad, and from there returned once again to Khwarazm where he experienced a series of three dreams which illustrate his growing sense of self-importance.[14] First, one night as he fell sleep after a super-erogatory prayer (*tahajjud*), Jesus appeared to him and told him that only four Muslim scholars through the ages have ever achieved the highest degree of sincerity and self-abnegation. These four were then identified as the famous early sufis Ibrahim b. Adham, Bayazid Bastami, Sahl b. 'Abdallah Tustari (d. 896) and Bahlul.[15] In the second dream, the prophet Solomon appeared to him and asked if he was being harassed by a certain Qazi Taj al-Din. Upon receiving affirmation from Fazlallah, Solomon ordered a hoopoe (*hudhud*) to fetch this miscreant and put him to death after a severe reprimand.[16]

While these two dreams gave Fazlallah special knowledge and a measure of prophetic protection, the third dream in Khwarazm was a premonition about his stature in universal spiritual hierarchy. He saw an extremely bright star rise in the east and emit a ray of light which entered his right eye upon reaching him. The light continued to flow until the whole star had poured into his eye, followed by a voice asking him if he knew the nature of this star. He confessed his ignorance and was told by the voice that this star rises once every few centuries. When he awakened, Fazlallah realized that, in another reference to Solomon, he could understand the language of birds and that the science of dream interpretation had become completely obvious to him.[17] Both these powers signified his growing ability to pierce surface appearances to get to ulterior greater meanings. The process would eventually lead to the point where the surrounding world was to him a conglomeration of signs which he could decipher based upon his knowledge of the unseen world ('*alam-i ghayb*). This capacity eventually garnered him the title Master of

Esoteric Interpretation (*sahib-i ta'vil*), the most common epithet used for him in Hurufi literature.[18]

The gift of dream interpretation received in the third dream was, in particular, the first quality to gain Fazlallah followers in Khwarazm. His success on this score continued when he moved first to Yazd and then to Tuqchi (or Tuqji or Tukhji), a suburb of Isfahan, where he headed a community of ascetics resident in a mosque.[19] Numerous nobles and army commanders now became his devotees, though the tradition maintains that neither he nor his retinue received any material benefit from such connections. After achieving considerable fame in Isfahan and its environs, Fazlallah decided to move to Tabriz. Here he gained popularity in Jalayir court circles again because of his dream interpretation, counting the reigning ruler Shaykh Uways (d. 1374) among his devotees at the hospice of Vali Dulaq.[20] In addition, the Sarbadar rulers of Sabzavar, themselves part of a religio-political messianic movement, now became frequent attendees at his gatherings.[21] The life-style followed by Fazlallah's community in Tabriz is evident from the story of his marriage to a young woman from the city's nobility. Khwaja Ishaq, one of Fazlallah's prominent successors, relates that the woman's parents, a Jalayir vizier and an Astarabadi woman, decided to arrange the marriage after becoming his devotees. Being aware of Fazlallah's commitment to an ascetic life, the woman's mother invited his close associate Kamal al-Din Hashimi to her house to say that she had a child (without specifying the gender) whom she wanted to attach to Fazlallah as a disciple. He replied that such a move would cause considerable hardship since the child would have to adjust from an opulent life-style to the poverty of a dervish. She persisted, however, and asked Hashimi to question Fazlallah himself about specific requirements. He was told that such an association would require the child to: forsake all personal belongings upon leaving the house; renounce any food or dress which could not be procured through the small means of a dervish; determine never to take a single step out of the hospice (*zaviya*) after entering it; adopt a bed made of sack, a pillow of felt, and a dress of cotton; respect the dervish community's practice of seclusion at night; and adopt the habit of daily repetitive prayers (*avrad*) at set times. The mother then approached her fourteen-year-old daughter with these conditions and was pleased to know that she was wholeheartedly willing to accept them. When Fazlallah was told that a woman wanted to join the group, he suggested that she first try out the restrictions to make sure that she would be able to withstand them. He then agreed to marry her and make her a part of the circle after she faithfully observed the conditions at a separate location for four months. Upon entry to the hospice, she put on the green dress of a dervish and learned to make caps like others to support herself.[22]

It was also in Tabriz that Fazlallah experienced the *zuhur-i kibriya* or

Manifestation of Divine Glory in Ramadan 775 AH (February–March 1374 CE).[23] At this his greatest revelatory moment, Fazlallah was made privy to monumental secrets such as the meanings of the separate letters in front of some Qur'anic chapters and the underlying logic behind Islamic rituals of daily prayer and fasting. Hurufis justified the prophetic quality of this revelation through a *hadith* report in which Muhammad was asked, 'How is a prophet (*nabi*) who he is?' He replied: 'Through a book that descends to him.' The inquisitor then asked what was the descended book, and he said the twenty-nine letters of the alphabet (*huruf al-mu'jam*), meaning the twenty-eight Arabic letters and *lam-alif*.[24] The curious insistence on the *lam-alif* (a combination of two 'normal' Arabic letters) as a separate letter in this context has a crucial function in the Hurufi understanding of prophetic cycles. Hurufi ideas about cosmic history stipulate that each scripture-bearing prophet proclaims a truer version of divine wisdom than his predecessor. Muhammad's Arabic Qur'an, therefore, superseded earlier scriptures since it unveiled a more explicit version of the divine mystery. The Qur'an itself, however, is not a transparent text and requires interpretation by knowledgeable Muslims in all ages. The Qur'an's exoteric meaning is available to many through a literal reading, but its numerous esoteric levels were conveyed only to Fazlallah in the Manifestation. His own works, written in Persian rather than Arabic, constituted both the ultimate interpretation of the Qur'an and the most direct divine message conveyed to humanity.

The *lam-alif* as a single 'letter' in the Arabic alphabet was the crucial marker predicting the change of language between the Qur'an and Fazlallah's works. The four letters l–m–a–f necessary for writing out the phrase *lam-alif* had, in fact, been stand-ins for the four letters p–ch–zh–g added to the Arabic script to write Persian. The 'descended book' which, in Muhammad's saying, ratified the mission of a prophet was the linguistic transition in Fazlallah's case. His works written in Persian consequently superseded the literal meaning of the Qur'an in the same way that the Qur'an had earlier supplanted Jewish and Christian scriptures.[25]

Fazlallah returned from Tabriz to Isfahan after the Manifestation and initially did not intend to make a public proclamation. However, he changed his mind after meeting an ailing mystic nicknamed *musafir* (traveller) who urged him to publicize the responsibility placed upon him.[26] The initiation of eight close companions at this point marked the formal birth of the Hurufiyya as a religious group stemming from Fazlallah's revelation. The circle expanded to include a much larger number of people in subsequent years, though the community always remained divided between a small group of close companions and a much larger mass of lay associates. Fazlallah's vicegerents (*khalifas*) were all educated and talented people who first absorbed his com-

plicated vision and then rearticulated it in their own works in the period following the master's execution.[27]

Within his lifetime, Fazlallah's standing as a prophet and the revelator of ultimate mystery was made to coincide also with the notion that he was the Mahdi or Muslim messiah expected just before the world's final destruction.[28] His own *Nawmnama* contains a vision to this effect: 'I saw that my clothes were white, pure and extremely clean; these were both my clothes and those of the Mahdi, the Imam, meaning that I knew that I was (him).'[29] Works by his followers also allude to him as the Mahdi on occasion,[30] though it is likely that this signification acquired greater validity after he was executed and some of his followers began to expect a second coming followed by the apocalypse and the day of judgment.[31]

Fazlallah spent the last fourteen years of his life propagating his mission. He describes a number of dreams that occurred in Tuqchi, Gilan and Damghan, indicating that the proselytizing endeavour was accompanied by considerable travel. His very last days were spent in Shamakhi where he was arrested on the orders of Timur's son Miranshah prior to execution.[32] One Hurufi source maintains that Fazlallah was in fact released from captivity soon thereafter and had a personal meeting with Timur near Bistam in which the conqueror was very respectful and had apologized for the inopportune incarceration.[33] Contrary to this, an external source contends that Fazlallah had invited Timur to accept his message but had been rebuffed, and that Fazlallah's execution had been sanctioned through juridical opinions pronounced by councils of prominent scholars in Gilan and Samarqand.[34] The Timurid administration had then arrested Fazlallah and he was executed in the fort of Alanjaq (also called Alanja) near Nakhchivan (now in the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan) in the month of Zhu l-Qa'da, 796 AH (1394 CE).[35] He is said to have had premonitions about his death, including a dream recorded in the *Nawmnama* in which he saw his own execution on the orders of a cripple (*shal-mard*) later identified as Timur.[36] He was survived by at least six children, some of whom played a role in later political history.[37] His followers later turned the place of his execution into a pilgrimage site patterned on the Ka'ba which they saw as the true earthly home of the divine being. They congregated around it every year on the date of his execution to perform the hajj, some of them expecting him to come back to life and lead the community towards a universal victory.[38]

Understanding the Hurufi Universe

From a historical vantage point, the internal Hurufi biography of Fazlallah conforms to a mould common in biographical collections of Muslim mystics.[39]

He is shown as a sayyid (descendant of Muhammad) and the son of a judge, indicating a high status by birth.[40] The early training consists of technical skills such as literacy, knowledge of Arabic, and familiarity with basic Islamic materials. This is followed by a transformative experience leading him to renounce worldly affairs and adopt the life-style of an itinerant mystic. He acquires fame for inspired qualities such as excellence in dream interpretation and undergoes further revelatory experiences. There is a kind of grand epiphany marking the full revelation of his status, and he agrees, after some persuasion, to assume the responsibilities incumbent upon him following the event. The articulation of his unique knowledge projects a distinct ideology preserved both in his writings and through the initiation of followers. Holders of political and religious authority find his teachings a threat to the status quo and he is consequently martyred at the hands of unjust forces. His message, however, is kept alive by his disciples beyond his death through the creation of a shrine and in their writings. Fazlallah's life, constituted and celebrated in Hurufi writings, thus comes to form the basis for a new Islamic sectarian identity. This plain narrative, rendered formulaic through pious selections and excisions of Hurufi authors, needs to be contextualized in the complex of the Hurufi worldview. What made Fazlallah an extraordinary being in the eyes of his followers was not the events of his life themselves but the way they fit into their overall understanding of human existence. To this end, it is necessary to provide a synopsis of Hurufism as a theoretical system.

Hurufi religion was, at its roots, an array of interrelated ideas about cosmogony, mythical history and hermeneutics, traceable eventually to Sufi and Shi'i antecedents. Their story of the cosmos begins with God's initial aloneness and his desire to be known which instigated him to create the world.[41] He first produced the heavens and the earth in six days and then, in the words of the Qur'an, 'sat himself upon the Throne ('*ala l-'arsh istiwa*')'.[42] Hurufis take this phrase to mean the creation of Adam,[43] explaining that 'sitting' is a metaphor for God's imprinting a full image of himself upon clay, a mixture of the elements earth and water. The inanimate image was then taught the names (*asma'*) of things,[44] meaning that God endowed him with knowledge, divinity's own paramount attribute. Adam in his completed form was thus both an image of God and the repository of his first epiphany or effusion of knowledge. His status as the apogee of the process of creation, a replica of God in both form and content, meant that he and his progeny had the potential to occupy any moral position in the universe. They could then, depending on their choices, be anything between God and Satan, the purely noble and the totally evil.[45]

Crucially for both cosmology and hermeneutics, the 'names' taught to Adam in the moment of creation were the thirty-two Letters (*huruf*) which

give the Hurufiyya its name.[46] The Letters as an aggregate represent the
general intellectual principle in the cosmos, here perceived as the building
blocks of a kind of meta-language through which all existent entities relate
to each other. What Adam received at the moment of creation was the capacity
for this meta-language through which he could comprehend the cosmos. All
humans possess the potential for acquiring this meta-language by virtue of
their descent from Adam, and this is the very thing that sets them apart from
all other created beings. Ordinary human languages in spoken or written
forms are built ultimately from the thirty-two Letters, and humans' ability to
acquire them through normal socialization is an indication of the greater
potential that lies within them. The truth of this idea is reflected in the facts
that a normal human mouth has thirty-two teeth[47] and is capable of producing
only thirty-two distinct sounds.[48] The Persian alphabet with its thirty-two
letters comes closest to a parity between normal language and the meta-
language, an idea ratified also by Muhammad's saying that Arabic and Persian
would be the only languages spoken in paradise.[49]

　　Hurufi authors demonstrate the all-encompassing nature of language most
frequently through the enigmatic maxim: the name is the essence of the thing
itself (*ism 'ayn-i musamma ast*). This 'key to the door of practising the science
of letters'[50] follows from the fact that, on one side of the equation, the names
of all physical, imaginary and conceptual entities rest ultimately on the
primordial meta-language. All things named are, therefore, predicated funda-
mentally on the set of thirty-two Letters as a whole. On the other side, the
essence (*'ayn*) of a thing is that element whose absence necessitates a complete
lack of the thing itself. The essence must be the meta-linguistic name of the
entity since it is the only element unequivocally necessary for the entity to
exist at all. If this were not so, the thing would fall outside the purview of
the thirty-two Letters, which is impossible. The primacy of language for
imaginary or conceptual entities is readily understandable since abstract
thought cannot be divorced from language. Even the essence of physical
things, however, lies in the linguistic concept encompassing them and not in
their elemental presences.[51] The most crucial inference to be drawn from this
argument is that the universe is most fundamentally a linguistic event. As the
creator, God has complete mastery over the meta-language while he has
endowed human beings with the possibility of acquiring it. The base potential
for this to happen is discernible in humans' everyday ability to comprehend
and vocalize ordinary languages and decipher various alphabets.[52] However,
the truest appreciation of cosmic mystery requires transcending these lan-
guages and becoming aware of the meta-language and its thirty-two Letters.
The inspiration of Fazlallah Astarabadi forms a pathway to this aim since he
is the only person with the full ability to translate between ordinary languages

and the meta-language. The task of a Hurufi student, then, is to master Fazlallah's works and utilize them for deciphering his own existence as well as the surrounding world.

As the only created entity capable of acquiring meta-language, the human being has a special place in propelling forward the aim of creation. In opposition to God's total and unchangeable perfection, the created world is said to undergo rotations and cycles exemplified in the movement of heavenly bodies and the march of seasons.[53] The principle of cycles is present in the development of cosmic history as well, so that the cycle of humanity began with Adam and will end in the day of judgment. This large span of time contains three smaller cycles whose boundaries are crucial markers on the procession of earthly time. These are: the cycle of prophethood (*nubuvvat*), from Adam to Muhammad; that of sainthood (*valayat*), from 'Ali, through the eleventh Shi'ilmam Hasan al-'Askari, to Fazlallah; and, beginning with Fazlallah, that of divinity (*uluhiyyat*).

The sequence of cycles is a graduated unfolding of the potential inscribed into the human form at the moment of creation. Adam's inceptive perfection is brought into the open piecemeal through the initiators of the three cycles, each of whom is a progressively more explicit form of God's self-manifestation. Fazlallah, of course, holds the most elevated position in this scheme since he begins the cycle of divinity and is a complete representation of the divine in human form. By virtue of this extraordinary designation, he is also what previous prophets and saints have referred to as the Seal of Sainthood (*khatam-i valayat*), the Perfect Man (*insan-i kamil*),[54] and the mahdi who, as promised in *Hadith*, will 'fill the earth with equity and justice just as it was filled with tyranny and oppression'.[55]

Fazlallah's status as the full realization of the divine principle in material form implies that he has complete mastery over the thirty-two Letters. The science of Letters ('*ilm-i huruf*) expounded in his works is the guide through which human beings can discover the true names of existent things. Fazlallah's knowledge therefore enables him and his followers to penetrate to the essences of things instead of being limited to their lesser outward appearances.[56] Fazlallah's title of Master of Esoteric Interpretation (*Sahib-i ta'vil*) means that for him all of existence is like an open book ready to be read and deciphered.[57]

Fazlallah's arrival in the world also provides the connection between Hurufi theory and a particular apocalyptic expectation. His physical body is to be seen as a receptacle for the thirty-two Letters. These have descended upon him in the form of epiphanies, enabling him both to see himself in all of creation and project his power through all time and space.[58] As the real Adam, formed in God's image and endowed with all his essential attributes, he is the

progenitor of all prophets, saints and other humans, and they are obligated to prostrate in front of him in recognition of his unmatched status.[59] The incorporation of all forms and knowledges in his person means that his coming denotes the Gathering (*mahshar*) of all beings which precedes the day of judgment in Islamic apocalyptic imagination.[60]

Fazlallah's followers hold a special status at this moment since they have secured their salvation by accepting his knowledge. As evident from his exemplary moral life-style, he possesses the ability completely to deflect the carnal desires of his lower soul (*hava-yi nafs*). When transmitted to his followers, this quality makes them appear in exalted dreams (*khwabha-yi buland*)[61] which they themselves or others experience during sleep.[62] This is so because the suspension of sensory functions during sleep enables the soul (*ruh*) attached to a body to experience the world of essences ('*alam-i ma'na*).[63] The human soul is subject to pleasant and unpleasant experiences in this world in the same way that a body undergoes these sensations in the physical world. During sleep, the soul is temporarily freed from its bond with the body and is able to perceive the world of essences for a short period. What a particular soul sees during sleep awaits it after death, the final severing of the bond between body and soul. Good dreams indicate, therefore, an individual's accession to paradise, while bad dreams, such as those with snakes, scorpions and other deadly creatures, predict the impending tortures of hell. The Hurufi understanding of dreams makes it logical that a person who follows Fazlallah will attain paradise since his company induces pleasant dreams. Furthermore, as the interpreter par excellence, Fazlallah himself is the ultimate jury for deciding between auspicious and inauspicious dreams.

The extraordinary qualities attributed to Fazlallah show that his followers regarded him as an 'ultimate' figure on numerous fronts. Hurufi views of religious authority, history and the cosmos converged on his person, so that he was the Master of Esoteric Interpretation (*Sahib-i ta'vil*) and the initiator of the cycle of divinity after the prophetic and saintly cycles. Regarded as the image of divinity in both being and knowledge, he was worthy of the remarkable title Lord of All Being (*rabb al-'alamin*). Once contextualized in this theoretical superstructure, the story of a pious man from Astarabad turns out not to be an ordinary hagiography. It is, instead, the record of a concrete presence of the divine in the terrestrial world.

Hurufism after Fazlallah's Death

Given the metaphysical significance of Fazlallah's person in Hurufi thought, it is natural that his untimely death caused his followers to renegotiate their beliefs. This was done mainly through extending the movement's historical

and cosmological understandings to integrate his death and burial place into the overall picture.[64] Although drawing a detailed picture of the movement in this period is difficult because of scarcity of evidence, circumstantial evidence suggests that Fazlallah's followers split into two groups based on their views about the status of his mission in his absence. One faction believed that the benefits promised from his appearance had already become manifest while the other began to look forward to a future triumph realized through either his own second coming or the activist struggle of his descendants and followers. For the first viewpoint, a substantial group of Hurufis minimized the effect of Fazlallah's death by stating that seeing him in the flesh had been the face to face meeting with God promised for the day of judgment in the Qur'an.[65] Like Nizari Isma'ilis before them at the Resurrection in 1164, they now came to the remarkable conclusion that they were already in paradise, based upon their acceptance of Hurufi principles. In the words of Ghiyas al-Din Astarabadi, these Hurufis stated that:

> Paradise and hell consist of knowledge and ignorance respectively. Since we are cognizant of the thirty-two Letters, of our own being, and of all things, all things are paradise to us. There is no longer prayer, or fasting, or cleanliness, or things illicit – everything is lawful. These things are all obligations, and there can be no obligations in paradise. Paradise denotes this world, (although only) with knowledge of the science of Letters (*'ilm-i huruf*) and the explanations of the Master of Explanation (*sahib-i bayan*).[66]

Hajji 'Isa Bidlisi who supported this view once questioned Fazlallah's disciple 'Ali al-A'la (d. 1419) [67] about it in the vicinity of Uludag (i.e. Bursa). He tried to dissipate the antinomian potential of the suggestion by referring to Fazlallah's statement in the *Mahabbatnama* that love for God means praising him perpetually through every part of one's body. He surmised that since the daily prayers are expressions of love, they remain applicable in paradise.[68] Even accepting the view, therefore, required continuing a life bound to rituals and social norms. 'Ali al-A'la's views failed to convince everyone, however, since adherents of the sect in Shirvan, Gilan, Khurasan, Luristan, Kurdistan and Iraq remained of the opinion that prayers should no longer be incumbent upon them. Some people in Tabriz even took the matter further and claimed:

> Whatever is in creation is the due of the knowledgeable person (*insan-i'arif*). He should procure and utilize whatever is obtainable to him. As for what is beyond his reach, he ought to regard it as his by right and should strive to get it out of the other's hands to take possession of it. Prayer, worship, the greater and lesser ablutions, and all the likes of these things are abrogated. Prayer was instituted so that the reality (*haqiqat*) underlying it may become known. When

that reality has become obvious, there is no more prayer or other similar obligations.[69]

There is no historical evidence to suggest that the proponents of this view were ever able to carry out their threat of public disorder.[70] They were opposed by Fazlallah's major disciples since, as leaders, the main objective of the latter was to preserve the Hurufiyya as a cohesive community after Fazlallah's death. The antinomian viewpoint, nevertheless, took some of Fazlallah's own doctrines to their logical conclusion.

Against the idea that Fazlallah's mission had been fulfilled, the Hurufi faction which included his prominent vicegerents such as 'Ali al-A'la and Khwaja Sayyid Ishaq believed that the earthly victory of the chosen community was yet to materialize. Some in this group likened Fazlallah's first appearance to the work of a farmer planting the seed which would bear fruit at a later time. Based upon an allegorical reading of Qur'an 30: 4, they expected Fazlallah to rise up again in Khurasan, travel to Mecca to be proclaimed the messiah, and be rejoined with his followers at the site of his martyrdom in Alanjaq before proceeding to the conquest of Constantinople.[71] This itinerary was derived from a popular *hadith* report about the mahdi, and its Hurufi interpretation implied that Fazlallah was to fulfil messianic predictions only in his second coming.[72] This group's rationalization of Fazlallah's death split even his appearance in the world into esoteric and exoteric components. The knowledge he had imparted to his followers before his death at Alanjaq was the esoteric truth which had lead to the formation of a loyal community. His second coming would then fulfil the exoteric part of the messianic tradition through an explicitly political triumph. Hurufis' annual hajj to Alanjaq with its elaborate symbolism was, therefore, both a commemoration of his earlier presence and an indication of their hopes for the future.[73]

In parallel with views about his second coming, some Hurufis expected the worldly victory to come through the work of his descendants and followers. Among his children, the activities of his daughter Kalimatallah al-'Ulya in Tabriz were suppressed by the Karakoyunlu ruler Jahan Shah (d. 1467) in 1441–42. Mentioned as Fazlallah's principal heir in a work by Khwaja Ishaq,[74] she and her husband had gathered a loyal following around themselves which provoked the suspicion of the local scholarly community. Jahan Shah was able to resist pressure from her enemies for some period but eventually gave in and issued the fatal order which led to both her death and the massacre of more than five hundred followers.[75]

After Kalimatallah's demise, the Hurufi proselytization effort shifted from Iran to the strengthening Ottoman empire.[76] Their effort to enlist the allegiance of the Ottoman sultans is illustrated in a single report about an incident

alleged to have taken place around 1450. A famous biographer of early Ottoman scholars states that at this time some followers of Fazlallah Astarabadi managed to enter the company of a very young Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror (r. 1451–81) and make him take an interest in their doctrines. This caused great alarm to the vizier Mahmud Pasha who was, however, unable to intervene directly fearing the ruler's displeasure. He decided to elicit the aid of a certain Mawla Fakhr al-Din 'Ajami, a prominent scholar under the court's patronage, in investigating the matter. Mahmud Pasha then invited the leader of the Hurufi group to his house and pretended that he was inclined to their faith. Encouraged by this good news, the Hurufi began to list all the group's doctrines, but when he reached the topic of *hulul* (the idea that divinity can reside in a human body), Fakhr al-Din could not contain himself any longer and came out to curse the 'heretic' with great passion. He then pursued the offender to the palace where the latter went to seek refuge with Mehmet. However, the prince was cowed by the cleric's ferocity and did not rise to his companion's defence. He was then taken to the new mosque in Edirne where the muezzin gave out the call for a special prayer. Once people had gathered, Fakhr al-Din climbed the minbar and proclaimed a thorough denunciation of Hurufis' beliefs and the spiritual reward to be gained by participating in putting them to death. The order was given to prepare a fire to burn the leader of the group and, by that token, extinguish the dangerous fire of this heresy before it spread. Fakhr al-Din himself became so enthusiastic in fanning the flames that his large beard caught fire. The group's leader was then put in the fire by the others, followed by the execution of the remainder of the group.[77]

This account of Hurufi activities at the Ottoman court is, in all likelihood, an abbreviated version of the actual incident which must have involved religious as well as political factors. As is evident from the discussion above, Hurufi thought could justifiably be charged with accepting the principle of divinity residing in a human body. However, this is not the way the Hurufis directly articulated their beliefs, and a prosecutor would have to have considerable knowledge of the system as a whole to argue the point. It is likely that the job of denouncing the Hurufis fell upon Fakhr al-Din 'Ajami because he was of Iranian origin and was already aware of their ideas based upon their activity in his homeland. His background as a mainstream scholar predetermined his hostility towards the Hurufis, and political forces fearful that the young Sultan might deviate from the control of the viziers utilized him to justify the movement's suppression. Despite this setback, Hurufism managed to find a congenial home in the environment of the Bektashi Sufi order in Ottoman domains where it survived as a separate syllabus for advanced students from medieval times to the modern period.[78] In addition,

Hurufi religious ideas seeped into Ottoman society at large where they provided the inspiration for various later heterodox movements.[79]

Conclusion

Representing the ethos of Islamic esotericism, Fazlallah Astarabadi and his Hurufi followers understood their surrounding universe to be a matrix of signs pointing to a greater reality. Their ontological hierarchy assigned the esoteric realm a higher status, but knowledge of this world could be attained only by deciphering their own lesser terrestrial existence. Although prophets and saints appointed by God had guided humans towards esoteric truth in all periods, the Hurufis felt themselves the ultimate chosen people since their community had been host to the presence of Fazlallah Astarabadi. The unveiling of cosmic mystery in his person and through his inspiration had fulfilled the ultimate aim of creation, and it was now time for the physical world to come to its destined end. Those living in the age could choose either to gain paradise by accepting Fazlallah's message, or reject him and ready themselves for the tortures of hell. The battle between good and evil played on the grand tableau of cosmic history had reached its zenith and all present were to prepare themselves for its conclusion.

The apocalyptic scenario outlined in this summary of the Hurufi worldview was underpinned by a theoretical system remarkable for its thoroughness and complexity. Hurufi authors took the claim of a final unveiling of existence quite literally, laying out in great detail the exact meanings behind ritual actions and parts of the human body.[80] Fazlallah once told his disciples that he could relate the conditions of every member of a Friday congregation by just observing them praying and hearing one dream from a single person among them.[81] For most Hurufis, the ability to understand rituals did not mean that they were no longer requisite acts. However, Hurufis performing their daily prayers or fasting in the month of Ramadan considered the rituals rational rather than symbolic actions.

Hurufis' claims about their superiority over others rested ultimately on their knowledge of the thirty-two Letters which formed the source code at the base of all creation. These Letters constituted the language in which God had articulated the cosmos. He had conferred a special status on humans, the only created beings formed in his own image, by entrusting them with the capacity to acquire the Letters. A full revelation of the Letters had occurred at only two points in human history: once at the moment of creation when God had taught Adam the 'names', and next during Fazlallah's experience of the Manifestation of Divine Glory in Tabriz in 1374. The initial revelation had inscribed all humans with the potential for acquiring the Letters, and the

last indicated that it was time to lay open the game of creation and determine its winners and losers. Formed in God's image like all humans and given perfect knowledge of the Letters, Fazlallah was a complete manifestation of the divine in terrestrial form. The aim of his followers, troops of God in the most literal sense, was to absorb Fazlallah's knowledge through his personal guidance and written works, thereby ensuring themselves everlasting salvation.

Although completely confident of its belief in Fazlallah's revelation, the Hurufiyya did not possess the means to control its worldly circumstances. Fazlallah's disciples expected that the all-important spiritual side of the millennial moment would compel the world to behave according to the predictions of Islamic messianic and apocalyptic traditions. Fazlallah's death before an obvious worldly triumph meant that the doctrine had to be adjusted to fit the new circumstances. Some of his followers accomplished this by interpreting the promised physical reward as a metaphor for their status as the possessors of ultimate knowledge. Others, however, continued to hope for a physical materialization through either Fazlallah's second coming or the efforts of those who had inherited his mission. Neither of these reinterpretations of tradition was able to withstand continuing adverse circumstances and the erosion of time, causing the movement eventually to dissolve away into the folds of history, leaving only traces in the intellectual outlooks of other traditions.

The history of the Hurufiyya contains the typical cycle of expectation and disappointment familiar to us from other millennialist movements. While the Hurufis certainly failed to actualize their ultimate vision, the efflorescence of activity sparked by Fazlallah's pronouncements represents an uncommonly innovative exploration of religious ideas in the Islamic East in late medieval times. Like other millennialist movements before and after it, the themes emphasized by the Hurufiiyya resonated strongly with the inhabitants of its surroundings. Only a minority may have actively supported the Hurufis, but the intellectual vision their writings gave voice to represented a continuous tradition which both preceded and succeeded the momentary flash of their activity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In deciphering the signs of creation and apocalypse, the Hurufis considered their effort a vindication of the ultimate principle underlying the perspective of Islamic esotericism.

IV

Modern Times

American Millennial Visions: Towards Construction of a New Architectonic of American Apocalypticism

Stephen J. Stein

America's millennial visions comprise a highly diverse set of expectations concerning an impending end to the present order of things. This broad definition of millennialism is necessary in order to embrace the wide range of historical materials that properly belong to this subject. Millennial and/or apocalyptic visions have exercised a powerful influence in American society from the age of discovery and colonization, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of our national experience, and to the present.[1] The past several decades have witnessed the publication of a growing body of scholarly literature focused on the origins, development, images and themes involved with millennialism, as well as on the impact of the organizations and movements structured around apocalyptic ideas. Despite this contemporary surge of scholarship, no compelling architectonic exists that is adequate for organizing or categorizing the complexity and the variety of such notions in American history.

In this chapter I intend to examine select examples of the historical materials that bear on the history of millennial visions in America in different time periods as well as to explore the ways in which scholars have interpreted and reinterpreted those materials. One primary sub-theme in this presentation derives from the fact that a number of scholarly judgments from the past are being revised at present. This is an appropriate time for rethinking our understanding of the history of millennialism in America, especially in view of the widespread interest in the subject generated by the turn of the millennium. My hope is that this chapter will assist with the task of trying to find a more satisfactory way of talking about millennial visions in American history. To that end I will propose a series of observations for the construction of a new architectonic of American apocalypticism.

The challenge facing those who would propose a systematic approach to understanding America's millennial visions is immense. The apocalyptic ideas held by Americans over the past four hundred or so years defy easy generalization. The juxtaposition of two prominent cases illustrates that complexity.

In 1742 the New England minister and theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703–58) published some heady speculations concerning the larger meaning of the evangelical revivals then occurring throughout the English colonies in America. Moved by the religious excitement of what historians have called the 'Great Awakening', Edwards penned the following judgment: ''Tis not unlikely that this work of God's Spirit, that is so extraordinary and wonderful, is the dawning, or at least the prelude, of that glorious work of God, so often foretold in Scripture, which in the progress and issue of it, shall renew the world of mankind.' In a word, he believed the revivals were the start of something special in God's overall economy – perhaps the beginning or an earnest of the promised millennium itself. Edwards went on to add, 'And there are many things that make it probable that this work will begin in America.'[2] Though there is some debate regarding Edwards's precise meaning, he and other religious observers of like mind were waiting hopefully for signs that God's millennial promises as articulated in the Bible might be fulfilled in his own day, and for a brief moment in his case he saw reason to believe that America might be at the centre of that action.[3] Edwards's contemporary status as a leading defender of the revivals and a prominent Reformed theologian guaranteed that his ideas would not be dismissed as the rantings of a misguided mind, though he did come under some criticism from theological opponents for his comments.

Edwards's public proclamation in 1742 rested on two decades of persistent private study of the apocalyptic sections of the Bible and an equally long effort at trying to correlate the events of history and happenings in the contemporary world with the symbols and images described in the Book of Revelation.[4] In that effort he was following a tradition of apocalyptic exegesis that had existed for centuries within Christianity. In particular, he was beholden to hermeneutical patterns within the Anglo-American Puritan tradition. It is significant to remember how respected such an exegetical enterprise was in certain wings of Protestantism. Edwards's millennialism did not result in public condemnation or marginalization. On the contrary, his apocalyptic ideas were quite mainstream for the time and place.

The contrast is overwhelming between his situation in 1742 and the public outcry that arose in 1993 when it was reported that David Koresh (1959–93; born Vernon Howell) wanted a little more time before ending the standoff between members of his Mount Carmel community – renamed 'Ranch Apocalypse' – and agents of the federal government in Waco, Texas. He asked for

the time in order that he might complete his interpretation of the seven seals of the Book of Revelation. The press echoed the ridicule and hostility explicit in a phrase used by Jeff Jamar, the FBI agent in charge at Waco. After nearly a month of the armed standoff, Jamar told his negotiators to 'not allow any more "Bible babble" from Koresh'.[5] In the end, the nation, after monitoring the conflict via its television sets for fifty-one days, watched with horror when the assault produced the fiery inferno in which seventy-four Branch Davidians, including Koresh himself and twenty-one children, died. The charges and counter-charges that followed the tragedy reflected little understanding of or tolerance for the millennial vision that informed the actions of Koresh and his followers.

During the last days of the siege Koresh was engaged in writing an interpretation of the seven seals. Federal agents thought that his request to finish the task of decoding 'the message of the Seven Seals' was simply a stalling tactic. After the tragedy, a computer disk surfaced that had been carried out of the fire by one of the surviving Branch Davidians. It contained the opening segment of a manuscript on which Koresh was working, tentatively entitled 'The Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation'. In it he had finished only a preliminary interpretation of the first seal.[6]

Koresh's text, by his own admission, is neither scholarly nor sophisticated, but rather 'just simple talk and reason'. He declared the Book of Revelation to be the 'most awe inspiring' and 'the most misunderstood' of the biblical records. He regarded it as his work to 'unfold' the mystery of the Apocalypse. Koresh affirmed confidently that the apostle John's record in the last book of the New Testament 'contains the past, present, and future events that revolve around the Revelation of Jesus Christ'. And, in particular, the seven seals tell of the 'things which must shortly come to pass'. He also alluded to the possibility that the very moment he was writing his commentary might be the 'last days', and therefore it was critical for God's servants to understand the meaning of the seven seals.[7]

Koresh's exposition of the first seal in Revelation 6: 1–2 consists of a weaving together of three elements: passages from the Book of Revelation, biblical texts from other books of the Bible, and his own brief commentary. In view of the uncertainties surrounding the standoff at the moment when he was writing, the last two sentences in Koresh's exposition are most intriguing. He wrote, 'Yes, the bride is definitely to be revealed for we know that Christ is in the Heavenly Sanctuary anticipating His Marriage of which God has spoken. Should we not eagerly ourselves be ready to accept this truth and *come out of our closet* [emphasis added] and be revealed to the world as those who love Christ in truth and in righteousness.'[8] Perhaps Koresh intended to end the standoff peacefully.

Jonathan Edwards and David Koresh form an unlikely pair. One was an eighteenth-century figure, the other a news-maker in the late twentieth century; one was highly respected as a religious leader, the other widely condemned as a pariah; one was associated with a mainstream religious movement, the other denounced by virtually all commentators as radical and marginal. Yet both were equally preoccupied with apocalyptic matters, and both were confident that in the apocalyptic texts of the Bible lay critical clues to the impending course of history. Together the two illustrate the complexity of the challenge facing those who might wish for more useful analytical categories to employ in the discussion of America's millennial visions. The move from Edwards to Koresh also evidences a contemporary shift in scholarly attention in the field of millennial studies, from a preoccupation with mainstream figures and movements, to an increasing concern with persons and groups located on the margins in American history.[9]

The Scholarship on American Millennialism

The past several decades have witnessed a major expansion of scholarship directed towards apocalypticism and millennialism in America. This is not the first time such an historiographical observation has been recorded. In 1965 David E. Smith published an essay entitled 'Millenarian Scholarship in America' which opened with a lament recorded in 1952 by Ira V. Brown in which he stated that the millennial tradition was one of 'the most neglected themes in the history of American thought'. Smith, however, went on to assert that, fortunately, in 1965 that was no longer the situation because a number of recent studies had appeared 'emphasizing the importance of the idea of the imminent millennium'.[10] Included in the works he cited were the pioneering studies by Norman Cohn, Ernest Tuveson, Whitney Cross and Timothy Smith, to mention only a few.[11] In his essay David E. Smith also identified a variety of rich primary sources that begged for attention in both the colonial era and the nineteenth century. In addition, he called for a broad interdisciplinary approach to the study of millennial traditions, an approach involving historical, literary and religious scholarship. Smith was himself an active participant in the developing American Studies movement in America. The 1960s were also years in which the Religious Studies movement was expanding throughout the United States.

David E. Smith's article was but the first of several bibliographical essays that have periodically announced a new wave of scholarship directed towards millennialism. In 1976 Hillel Schwartz published an article in *Religious Studies Review* assessing the 'methodological and substantive contributions' of what he called a second generation of scholars focused on millenarianism. Schwartz

did not confine his attention to Americanists alone; his observations dealt with the broader understanding of such movements and with the recognition that the new interdisciplinary approach had yielded significantly different judgments. Rather than seeing such movements as 'symptomatic of social or personal illness', this new generation of scholars was more likely to regard such beliefs and actions as 'an arsenal of world-sustaining forces'.[12] Schwartz featured in his account the work of biblical scholars Paul D. Hanson and John G. Gager, medievalist Marjorie Reeves, historians of English sectarianism Christopher Hill and William L. Lamont, as well as American historians Robert Middlekauff and Ernest R. Sandeen – to name but a few.[13] He observed that this newer scholarship tended 'to stress the continuity and strength of millennial expectations'.[14] In the bibliography attached to his essay, Schwartz cited 262 publications related to millennialism published between 1969 and 1975.[15]

In 1988 Dietrich G. Buss published in *Fides et Historia* a survey of the literature on millennialism that had appeared between 1965 and 1985. His analysis, which relied heavily on the now increasingly suspect distinction between pre-millennialism and post-millennialism, affirmed the social and religious agenda of contemporaries subscribing to a 'spiritual' millennialism while expressing caution and criticism concerning aspects of the programme of 'secular' millennialists.[16] In 1992 a book-length bibliography appeared entitled *Millennialism: An International Bibliography* compiled by Ted Daniels which contains some 7,500 references filling 657 pages.[17] Daniels, unfortunately, offers little help with categorization of the references, providing only an alphabetical arrangement and modest subject indices. His volume is evidence of the unordered state of this field of study at present and of the pressing need for clarification and different categories.

It is out of the context of this vastly expanded interdisciplinary scholarship dealing with millennialism and apocalypticism in general and with the American expressions of these traditions and phenomena in particular that the following observations arise. Collectively these reflections provide the foundation for the construction of a new architectonic of apocalypticism in America. Here are the observations:

1. Apocalypticism appeals to the human desire to know the future and to be allied with the forces of virtue, no matter how defined.
2. Apocalyptic texts, images and symbols possess an amazing plasticity that invites and reinforces interpretation and reinterpretation.
3. Confidence, urgency and hostility are three of the most striking aspects that characterize apocalyptic discourse, whether religious or secular.
4. American apocalypticism has a derivative character because it draws on texts and traditions much older than American society.

5. Apocalyptic movements in America often make use of new 'texts' and experiences in addition to ancient documents.
6. American apocalyptic traditions frequently identify a special role for the American nation.
7. American apocalyptic movements have not been particularly self-reflexive or self-critical.
8. American apocalypticism has prospered, especially in the context of alternative or outsider groups.
9. Religious apocalypticism and secular apocalypticism exist within a measured symbiotic relationship.
10. In America there is little likelihood that the interest in apocalypticism will diminish in the future.

The historical survey that follows confirms the usefulness of these observations for understanding apocalypticism in America.

The Age of Discovery and Settlement

The most frequently repeated observation concerning the millennial mindset in early America during the period of discovery and settlement is the widespread judgment that the settlers who founded the Massachusetts Bay colony under the leadership of governor John Winthrop (1588–1649) saw their undertaking in eschatological terms. Winthrop's address in 1630 on board the *Arbella*, 'The Model of Christian Charity', is the classic proof text for this view.[18] His felicitous language of mission and covenant, combined with the memorable image of 'the city on a hill', has been interpreted as evidence of a forward-looking, almost millennial, significance attached to the migration to the New World.[19] That conclusion has been buttressed by reference to the larger apocalyptic interests that the first generation of New England clergy manifested.

The cultural and political implications of this interpretation of the 'errand into the wilderness' have been immense. Americans have used Winthrop's speech as a foundational text for a sense of exceptionalism and of special responsibility (whether it be of divine origin or simply a product of historical circumstances). The political capital available in the image of the 'city on a hill' has not been lost on politicians or religious leaders down to the present.[20] Winthrop's speech also has become canonical literature for schoolchildren.

Yet a wave of revisionism has challenged this standard interpretation. The combined efforts of scholars such as Andrew Delbanco and Theodore Dwight Bozeman have forced a revision in this earliest chapter of the history of America's millennial visions. To cite Bozeman, the evidence is overwhelming

in opposition to the standard reading of Winthrop's speech. Those first settlers, Winthrop included, had much less sense of confidence than we have ascribed traditionally to them, and little if any sense of an eschatological undertaking. Bozeman declares Winthrop's famous image of the 'city on a hill', 'nothing more than a momentary embellishment of the argument, a touch of rhetorical hyperbole rephrasing a popular biblical text (Matthew 5: 14)'.[21] Alternatively, Bozeman sees the earliest generation preoccupied with creating an ecclesiastical community in New England consistent with the primitive Christianity described in the New Testament. Those settlers were, in his judgment, less forward-looking and more concerned with restoring a pure biblical Christianity.

Those who wish to identify eschatological motives behind early European efforts in America would do well to give more attention to the crusading apocalypticism of Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) or that of the Franciscans of New Spain rather than to the metaphorical apocalypticism of John Winthrop. In 1500 Columbus wrote: 'God made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth of which he spoke in the Apocalypse of St. John after having spoke of it through the mouth of Isaiah, and he showed me the spot where to find it.'[22] Franciscans active in Mexico imagined that the conversion of the native population was evidence of the nearness of the end times.[23] For these Roman Catholics, exploration and conquest – both geographical and religious – were motivated by apocalyptic notions.

Very few scholars who had written about millennialism or apocalypticism in early New England during the preceding two decades escaped Bozeman's revisionist broadside. I find his critique most telling in so far as it relates to the issue of motives driving the Puritan migration to the New World. I find it less persuasive when he seeks to undercut the broader eschatological interests of the early settlers. There is much more to the early American millennial visions than simply the issue of motives for the migration to the New World. Perhaps the term 'millennium' itself is part of the problem. Apocalypticism and millennialism in the broadest sense include much more than the narrow concept of a literal millennium. The variety of eschatological concerns that were important to members of the first generation in New England confirms the place of apocalyptic in their worldview. An apocalyptic framework had been part of their thinking in the Old World, and it continued to be so when they came to America.[24]

One example of that outlook involves the Puritan rejection of Anglican liturgical practices, including the use of the surplice as well as kneeling and making the sign of the cross. Thomas Hooker (1586–1647), who became the minister at Hartford, attacked those ceremonies as marks of false religion identified with the Antichrist and his antichristian allies.[25] Hooker and other

early settlers viewed their ecclesiastical struggle with Anglicanism in apocalyptic categories. John Davenport (1597–1670), the minister in New Haven, gained a reputation for preaching on traditional millennial topics, including the second coming of Christ, the future conversion of the Jews, and the first and second resurrections – all topics closely linked to apocalyptic reflection.[26] But more than any other first generation New England leader, it was John Cotton (1584–1652) who distinguished himself by his preoccupation with eschatological concerns. He preached and published repeatedly on the texts from the Book of Revelation.[27] Virtually every possible apocalyptic topic received attention in his commentaries. In all fairness, Bozeman, too, acknowledges these interests of the first generation, but he speaks of them as 'inchoate' in form.[28]

The apocalyptic interests of the second and third generations in New England have also been the subject of extensive scholarly attention. The ocean did not buffer the Puritans and others in America from the turmoil in Great Britain. The religious, social and military conflicts in Old England were suffused with apocalyptic and millennial rhetoric. The generations in America after 1650 constructed a fuller eschatological explanation for the founding of New England and thereby invested the colonial enterprise with more than a mundane purpose. The high sense of election they ascribed to the founders became the measure against which to judge the failings of subsequent generations. The jeremiad, a sermonic form comprised of an indictment of the evils of the day and a call to repentance, was a convenient medium for voicing apocalyptic and millennial themes.

It was, for example, Samuel Danforth (1626–74), the minister at Roxbury, Massachusetts, who sounded that notable phrase of the 'errand into the wilderness' in a sermon before the General Assembly in 1670 in an effort to call New Englanders to repentance and back to 'pure ordinances' from which he thought they had fallen. He assumed a prophetic posture and warned of potential divine displeasure.[29] Nicholas Noyes of Salem (1647–1717) shared that same jeremiadic perspective when measuring the second and third generations against the first. The period of the founders now became in the eyes of subsequent generations a golden age of sorts. Noyes and others employed biblical typology as a hermeneutical device to support their views. On one occasion in 1698 Noyes declared, '*Prophesie* is *History antedated*; and *History* is *Post-dated Prophesie*: the same thing is told in both.'[30] Biblical prophecy was the obsession of those interested in apocalyptic; history was the evidence they examined to confirm their interpretations. Perhaps the most popular commentator on apocalyptic in this period was Michael Wigglesworth (1631–1705) whose often-reprinted poetic depiction of the Final Judgment evoked terror in those fearful for their well-being and provided comfort for those

who relished the prospect of the endless joys of heaven.[31] Apocalyptic themes were central to the first general history of New England written by Edward Johnson (1608–72), a lay person in Woburn, Massachusetts. Johnson created a narrative that depicted the establishment of New England as a refuge for those oppressed by prelacy. He suggested that the inhabitants of the region would play a pivotal role in the spread of the gospel throughout the earth, thereby inaugurating the future 'blessed dayes'.[32] Samuel Sewall (1652–1730), a magistrate and man of affairs, wrote a commentary on the Apocalypse that featured America as the likely seat of the New Jerusalem.[33] All of these texts and others contain a wide assortment of apocalyptic themes in addition to the notion of a literal millennium, including identification of the Antichrist and his antichristian minions, recognition of the signs of the times, acknow-ledgement of a sense of purpose in history, admonitions concerning judgment and retribution, and depictions of a new heaven and new earth.

Another feature of recent scholarship relating to early American millennial visions is the increasing amount of attention being paid to radicals, sectarians and outsiders, those persons located on the religious or social margins, instead of to clerical elites and political leaders. As a result, the cast of players is less familiar to many, though some early dissenters are well known and have received considerable scholarly attention, most notably Anne Hutchinson (1591–1643) and Roger Williams (1603–83). In the case of Williams, for example, eschatology was central to his thinking.[34] But the newer scholarship is moving beyond these prominent dissenters.

Philip F. Gura, for example, in his study of religious radicalism in early New England, introduced Thomas Lechford (1590–1644), an attorney whose manuscript entitled 'Of Prophesie' provoked the calling of a special council in 1639 to condemn his errors; Ephraim Huit (d. 1644) of Windsor, Connecticut, whose sermons appeared in print as *The Whole Prophecies of Daniel explained* in 1644; and Thomas Parker (1595–1677) of Newbury, Massachusetts, who published *Visions and Prophecies of Daniel Expounded* in 1645. A number of other early New Englanders returned to Old England in the 1650s and joined the revolutionary Fifth Monarchy movement, including Hansard Knollys (?1599–1691), Thomas Millam, William Aspinwall (d. 1662) and Thomas Venner (d. 1661), all of whom gained prominence for their radical prophetic ideas.[35] Gura and others have also turned new attention to the activities of the Quakers in early New England and their testimony that the promised kingdom of God had arrived through the in-dwelling presence of the divine within members of the Society of Friends.[36]

New attention has also been given to those on the margins outside New England. David S. Lovejoy, for example, discusses religious outsiders of continental European origin who established religious communities in the

New World. In 1663 Pieter Cornelius Plockhoy (*c.* 1620–*c.* 1700) led a small group of former Dutch Mennonites to the mouth of the Delaware River where they founded Zwaanendael, a Christian commune dedicated to 'freedom, love, and equality'. In 1683 followers of the Frenchman Jean de Labadie under the leadership of Peter Sluyter (1645–1722) planted a small community called Bohemia Manor in Maryland. Their beliefs resembled those of the Quakers. In 1694 a company of Rosicrucian mystics of German background came to Pennsylvania under the leadership of Johannes Kelpius (1673–*c.* 1708). Their self-designation as the 'Order of the Woman in the Wilderness', a named derived from Revelation 12: 1–16, signalled the desire to pursue an apocalyptic mission in the New World.[37]

Many of these new religious movements in seventeenth-century America featured apocalypticism as a defining concern. Although often small and short-lived, these groups derived a sense of confidence and certainty in their cause from this tradition.

The Eighteenth Century

The periodization of time by historians often creates the unfortunate impression of discontinuity in history. Nothing could be less accurate. Eighteenth-century Americans joined their predecessors in the multiple uses of apocalyptic and in the construction of diverse millennial visions. Yet changing circumstances invited new interpretations of ancient texts and symbols.

No figure is more representative of the legacy of the seventeenth century or more anticipatory of developments in the eighteenth century than Cotton Mather (1663–1728). Scion of a leading family and positioned by birth for influence in both ecclesiastical and civil affairs, Mather's prodigious publications document his preoccupation with apocalyptic. He was a passionate student of prophecy, and he did not hesitate to speculate about the millennial timetable. Early on he pinpointed 1697 as a possible moment when history might end; later he looked for that culmination in 1716. Mather's many writings celebrated the prospect of New England playing a critical role in salvation history. His most comprehensive expression of apocalyptic confidence was the *Magnalia Christi Americana* in which he announced:

> I WRITE the *Wonders* of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION, flying from the Depravations of *Europe*, to the *American Strand*: And, assisted by the Holy Author of that *Religion*, I do, with all Conscience of *Truth*, required therein by Him, who is the *Truth* it self, Report the *Wonderful Displays* of His Infinite Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Faithfulness, wherewith His Divine Providence hath *Irradiated* an *Indian Wilderness*.[38]

For Mather, the American hemisphere was destined to figure centrally in the final eschatological events of history.

Mather, unfortunately, has suffered at the hands of historians who have seized upon his eccentricities and his inflated sense of self. His millennial vision has also been criticized. For example, in 1937 H. Richard Niebuhr accused Mather of reducing the kingdom of God to an 'institution', namely, the Congregational order in Boston, and the 'reign of Christ' to a 'habit', views that Niebuhr equated with a 'febrile subjectivism' and shallow moralism.[39] In recent decades a major, more positive re-evaluation of Mather's apocalypticism has occurred, sparked by Robert Middlekauff's perceptive study of three generations of Mathers – Richard, Increase and Cotton – at the centre of a New England world suffused with eschatological ideas.[40] Reiner Smolinski's recent edition of Mather's unpublished 'Triparadisus', 'his most comprehensive study of apocalypticism', documents Mather's engagement with the new challenges to biblical authority emanating from Enlightenment critics and its impact on his changing apocalyptic views.[41]

But it is not Cotton Mather who has occupied centre stage in the study of millennial visions in eighteenth-century America. The central figure has been Jonathan Edwards to whom Niebuhr also gave top billing in his early reflections concerning the kingdom of God in America. Niebuhr observed a shift in Edwards's eschatological thinking from an other-worldly perspective to an earthly kingdom. He wrote of Edwards: 'He did not abandon the double doctrine of the future, but as he became more convinced of the power of God and the reality of the Christian revolution the idea of the kingdom's coming to earth took a certain precedence.'[42] Niebuhr's judgments and a later pivotal essay published by C. C. Goen in 1959[43] on Edwards's 'post-millennialism' were critical building blocks for Alan Heimert's massive study of the social and political impact of evangelical religion in eighteenth-century America. The centrepiece in Heimert's argument was the millennial vision of Edwards. In what became a highly controversial interpretation, Heimert credited evangelicals with being liberal democrats and greatly responsible for moving the colonial populace towards revolution. According to Heimert, Edwards's writings, especially the sermon series delivered in 1739, made an earthly millennium 'an imminent and attainable reality'. He argued that Edwards viewed the evangelical revivals as evidence that such a 'non-cataclysmic millenarianism' was possible and that salvation was to be 'corporate' and 'temporal'.[44] Emboldened by that judgment, evangelicals supported the revolt against the crown in the 1770s.

This is not the venue for a full critique of Heimert's controversial thesis. Among its critics was James West Davidson whose perceptive study pointed out the weakness of ascribing the notion of unimpeded progress to post-

millennialists. Davidson demonstrated that even for optimistic millennialists, affliction often accompanied and impeded progress.[45] In other words, the standard assumptions associated with post-millennialism on which Heimert rested part of his argument were at best suspect, at worst flawed.

Despite a firestorm of criticism, Heimert's influence on the study of eschatology in American history has been substantial.[46] A generation or more of historians has invested heavily in the study of the religious factors, including millennial and apocalyptic ideas, contributing to the American Revolution. Most have found it necessary to engage Heimert's arguments directly. Nathan O. Hatch, for example, examined the ways in which the Protestant clergy established a pattern of utilizing apocalyptic imagery to advantage in the context of the French and Indian wars.[47] James West Davidson explored the inner logic that governed how eighteenth-century persons who turned to prophecy viewed the world.[48] Sacvan Bercovitch argued that the jeremiadic formulas suffused with millennial rhetoric and substance were a major factor moving Americans from the Great Awakening to the revolution and were critical in the development of a distinctive sense of American mission.[49] Ruth Bloch documented the widespread popularity of millennial ideas among Protestants throughout the second half of the eighteenth century and argued that 'a fully millennial interpretation of the imperial crisis' became a central part of moving American patriots from 'resistance to revolution'.[50] She also demonstrated the continuing significance of such ideas in the years following the conflict. Now more than thirty years after its initial publication, Heimert's thesis is receiving yet another round of reflection and commentary from contemporary historians.[51]

But these and a host of other scholars writing on the relationship between religion and the revolution have not convinced all of the instrumental role of religion in that struggle. Jon Butler has maintained that despite the presence of widespread millennialist rhetoric, the American Revolution 'was a profoundly secular event'. He contends that millennial rhetoric served to 'rationalize' rather than motivate decisions in the revolutionary environment.[52] Some of Butler's scepticism was evident in the earliest reviews of *Religion and the American Mind* authored by historians Edmund S. Morgan and Sidney E. Mead.[53]

In the study of the eighteenth century, too, recent scholarship on apocalypticism is now paying more attention to marginal religious movements. One example will suffice to make the point. Stephen A. Marini's study of radical religious sects in backwoods New England reveals the central role that eschatological ideas played in the emergence of the Shakers, the Universalists and the Freewill Baptists in the late eighteenth century. The complexity of their beliefs became evident when members of these groups attempted to interpret

signs of the times. The 'Dark Day' of 19 May 1780, for example, when much of New England experienced an eerie daytime pall, provoked both fear and hope simultaneously.[54] Those emotions and apocalyptic explanations of unusual phenomena were part of the reason that new dissenting or alternative communities managed to succeed and thrive in the context of the late eighteenth century.[55]

The Antebellum Nineteenth Century

It is a scholarly commonplace that the prevailing millennial visions in the period following the formation of the new nation and the turn of the nineteenth century were 'post-millennial'. 'Post-millennialism' as a narrow theological category is the belief that Christ's return will follow the earthly millennium. By the beginning of the nineteenth century post-millennialism is standardly depicted by historians as consistent with the rising sense of optimism within the young American nation, the belief in progress, and the corresponding confidence that the new society could shape a better world, one free from the worst manifestations of social and economic problems. In theological terms, such an era was a time when the power of sin, deeply embedded in the Calvinist view of human nature, gave way to a rising sense of ability and responsibility as well as to the possibility of human perfection identified with an Arminian perspective. The new burst of evangelical revivals, known as the Second Great Awakening, spread this optimistic outlook. In this time-period a reform impulse dominated both religious and secular organizations. Americans established societies and agencies devoted to a variety of specific causes: temperance, peace, women's rights, religious education, sabbatarianism, anti-slavery, missionary outreach, and the distribution of Bibles and tracts.[56]

The evangelical revivalist Charles Grandison Finney (1792–1875) personified this close association between changing theological views and the notion of the perfectibility of human nature and society. His preaching and writing stressed the dual importance of conversion and social reform in the process of establishing the millennial kingdom on earth. He is reported to have said on one occasion in 1830 to the congregation of the Third Presbyterian Church in Rochester, New York, that if Christians 'were united all over the world the Millennium might be brought about in three months', meaning that the reign of Christianity would be brought about by such conversions.[57]

Similar sentiments echoed throughout America in the decades preceding the Civil War. Edward Beecher (1803–95), a Congregationalist minister and prominent abolitionist in the Midwest in the 1830s, spoke about the conquest

of the earth by Christianity, a millennial vision that would be realized when Christians recognized their responsibility 'not merely to preach the gospel to every creature, but to reorganize human society in accordance with the law of God. To abolish all corruptions in religion and all abuses in the social system, and, so far as it has been erected on false principles, to take it down and erect it anew.'[58] Beecher's confidence marked this era's millennial visions and infused the full range of reform endeavours.[59] That same crusading fervour translated into sectional loyalty during the Civil War and was employed after the fact to interpret that bloody struggle.[60]

   The same years that witnessed the rise of this powerful post-millennial outlook gave rise to an alternative set of millennial visions commonly classified as 'pre-millennial'. 'Pre-millennialism' as a narrow theological category is the belief that Christ's return will occur before the earthly millennium. Pre-millennialism during this time-period is standardly depicted by historians as associated with a deep pessimism regarding the state of human affairs, despair over the prospect of any successful human effort to change things, and ultimate reliance on God's dramatic intervention into history through Christ's return to the earth. The most prominent pre-millennial movement in antebellum America was the adventist cause that centred on the teachings of William Miller (1782–1849), a Baptist lay preacher. On the basis of apocalyptic texts in the Bible, Miller calculated that Christ would return to the earth around the year 1843. He began preaching and writing about his ideas in the 1830s. By the end of the decade Miller's understanding of Christ's second coming had spread across the United States and Canada by various means, including adventist publications and camp meetings devoted to millennialism. This apocalyptic movement attracted widespread attention from both advocates and critics. Pressured by the zeal of his followers, Miller identified the date of Christ's return as falling between 21 March 1843, and 21 March 1844. When these dates passed, some in the movement argued for a recalculation of 22 October 1844, which Miller, after considerable reluctance, finally accepted. Excitement and a sense of urgency rose again, but that date, too, came and went, with a resulting widespread disappointment among the thousands of followers who had accepted his apocalyptic calculations and had waited eagerly for Christ's physical return.[61]

   The failure of the Millerite movement produced a wave of criticism and ridicule of pre-millennial adventism. Many involved learned a hard lesson about setting specific dates for eschatological events. Miller himself, however, never lost faith in the notion of Christ's imminent return. Others, too, continued to share that hope, despite the crushing disappointment; some, within a few years, formed the nucleus of the Seventh-day Adventist movement.[62]

Historians standardly use the antebellum period to draw the sharpest of contrasts between post-millennialism and pre-millennialism. The two typically are juxtaposed as optimism versus pessimism, progress versus declension, human activity versus divine intervention, gradualism versus cataclysm.[63] That stark contrast, however, has been criticized of late, especially by scholars focusing on the adventist movement. Many of the strongest proponents of Millerism had been very active in reform causes. Most strikingly, Joshua Himes (1805–95), a Boston minister in the Christian Connection who became the chief publicist for the movement, worked on behalf of temperance, pacifism and anti-slavery.[64] Furthermore, when the adventist movement regrouped under the leadership of Ellen White (1827–1915), the Seventh-day Adventist Church distinguished itself by its strong institutional commitment to health, education and other reform activities.[65] The traditional distinctions between the two types of millennialism are therefore not as helpful as previously believed.

Nor are post-millennialism and pre-millennialism appropriate categories for the apocalyptic visions that developed on the religious margins during the antebellum period. The years before the Civil War were times of aggressive religious innovation in the United States. The First Amendment to the Constitution, the presence of abundant land, and the growing stream of immigrants almost guaranteed the rise of new religious movements. Many of these groups possessed distinctive ideas concerning apocalyptic matters.

The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, better known as the Shakers, came to America from England in the late eighteenth century. Ann Lee (c. 1736–84), the founder and charismatic leader of the early community, condemned the established churches of her day and spoke of the need for an imminent transformation of the world. After her death her followers formed communal societies and attempted to structure a common life consistent with their millennial vision. They spoke of Ann Lee as a 'second Christ' and their community as a 'millennial church'. The Shakers abandoned private property and shared their possessions; they subordinated their individual wills to the decisions of the leaders of the community; they renounced marriage and sexual relations and accepted celibacy and the notion of a spiritual family. Their millennial ideas were peculiar to the society and highly offensive to most other Americans in the nineteenth century. The Shakers prospered in their villages for a time, but they never became a large movement.[66] Neither post-millennialism nor pre-millennialism is an apt description of Shaker apocalypticism.

The followers of another charismatic leader, Joseph Smith (1805–44), the founder and first prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in time became a large powerful community. From the earliest years of their

history, eschatological ideas were influential on the Mormons. They saw themselves as an elect people, part of a latter-day Israel who expected to inherit the earth at the point when it had been renewed and transformed. Their name is proof of the sense of imminence; they regarded themselves as living in the latter days and expected to see the second coming of Christ. A deep sense of 'chosenness' separated the 'Saints' – the self-designation of the Mormons – from the 'Gentiles' of the outside world, and an adversarial tone characterized relations between the two. The martyrdom of the prophet in 1844 confirmed that conflict motif. The passage of time and the migration westwards had the effect of changing the emphasis within Mormon millennialism. The Saints set about the task of building Zion in the West at the same time that they continued to employ the language of the latter-day. In the case of the Mormons, changing views also complicate the facile use of categories.[67]

The theological ideas that the Shakers and the Mormons used to buttress and support their distinctive millennial views illustrate the creative religious diversity among antebellum sectarian communities. The Shakers espoused a version of a realized eschatology, for they believed that the Second Coming had occurred in Ann Lee. Therefore the presence of the Christ spirit was now available to all members of the community. They, in turn, set out to embody a new order, one that reflected a unity, purity and theology not found outside the boundaries of the Shaker villages. In their system of thought Ann Lee and Jesus of Narazeth formed a pair of redemptive agents. Likewise, God was conceived in both male and female terms, as Almighty Power and Infinite Wisdom.[68] Mormon eschatology was more future-oriented. The Saints initially anticipated an imminent return of Christ and the inauguration of an earthly millennium. Joseph Smith was reluctant to set a specific date for that appearing, but he was careful to observe closely the signs of the times in order to be ready for Christ's return. Smith's visions and revelations were also the basis for a distinctive notion of the physical nature of God and for an explicit anti-Trinitarian view of God. Faithful Mormons ultimately expected that they themselves could rise to the status of gods and rule over future worlds.[69] In both communities eschatology was closely integrated with all aspects of theology.

Other communities with distinctive apocalyptic beliefs also flourished for limited periods of time in antebellum America. Among those groups were the Universal Friends in western New York led by Jemima Wilkinson (1752–1819), the Vermont Pilgrims who followed the wanderings of the prophet Isaac Bullard from New England to the Midwest, the members of the Harmony Society established by the German mystic George Rapp (1757–1847), the disciples of the prophet Matthias (b. 1787), and the Oneida Perfectionists

dominated by John Humphrey Noyes (1811–86). Each of these groups formulated an eschatological vision in which the founder and the community figured instrumentally in the divine economy.[70] These apocalyptic visions, too, do not sort neatly into the standard distinctions associated with post-millennialism and pre-millennialism.

Modern America, 1865–1945

The historiography on apocalypticism for the period from the Civil War through the Second World War has continued and even heightened the preoccupation with the distinction between post-millennialism and pre-millennialism despite the emerging scholarly judgment that these categories have limited usefulness for many groups. The contrast drawn between religious liberals and religious conservatives that dominates so much of the literature for these years seems to invite a Manichaean analysis. Historians have described that division in a number of different ways. Martin E. Marty wrote about the split between the public and the private parties in Protestantism.[71] Others have featured the conflict between Modernists and Fundamentalists or the contrast between advocates of the Social Gospel and proponents of the Gospel of Wealth.[72] Dualistic explanations appeal because of their simplicity. Unfortunately, the historical reality is more complex, and the fit with post-millennialism and pre-millennialism is often very loose.

The emergence of modern America in the post-Civil War years was marked by social tension and cultural conflict related to industrialization, urbanization, the increase of immigration, territorial expansion, religious and racial bigotry, and eventual involvement in international warfare. During these tumultuous times some Americans attempted to resuscitate the reform movements of antebellum America, employing all means at their disposal to solve the problems associated with modern life. Religious and secular reformers joined in these progressive efforts. Crusaders attacked vice, crime, poverty, intemperance, labour abuses, health problems, gender discrimination, racial inequality – to name only some of the problems – using such means as legislation, the ballot, education, moral suasion and collective assistance. Religious reformers active in these efforts were found in all traditions. For example, Protestant clergymen Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918) and Washington Gladden (1836–1918), Roman Catholic clerics James Cardinal Gibbons (1834–1921) and Father Edward McGlynn (1837–1900), and Jewish Rabbi Samuel S. Mayerberg (1892–1964) worked to solve the social problems of the day. Others crafted new institutional structures as part of the effort. Salvation Army 'Hallelujah lasses' assaulted urban ills by combining Holiness religion and soup kitchens. Jane Addams (1860–1935), who was raised a

Quaker, assisted immigrants in Chicago through Hull House, the most prom-
inent example of the settlement house movement. Visions of a better world
motivated these religious reformers, but few would have used the category of
post-millennialism as an explanation for their efforts. Their religious motives
were much more richly diverse.[73]

Therefore is it helpful to continue calling this liberal religious vision of a
better America 'post-millennial'? James H. Moorhead, perhaps the most
perceptive student of Protestant post-millennialism, recently has written the
coup de grâce for the category so far as it applies to twentieth-century liberals.
He has shown how Social Gospelers and those who followed them increasingly
subscribed to secular measures of their movement, drawing on the social
scientific knowledge of the day. He writes: 'The mania for technique, busi-
nesslike management, and professional expertise converged in an efficiency
movement in the early twentieth century.'[74] In effect, Moorhead contends,
religious liberals accepted secular assumptions and standards and in doing so
surrendered all concern with 'the End' or eschatology, a move that was
certainly innovative in its own right. Post-millennialism is therefore, in his
judgment, no longer an appropriate category to apply to such secularized
religious visions.

A different sort of innovation was occurring on the conservative side of
the millennial debate. During these same eighty years the movement later
known as fundamentalism began to take institutional and theological form.
One of the earliest scholarly efforts to make sense of these developments was
Ernest R. Sandeen's pathbreaking study dealing with the millenarian roots of
the movement. Sandeen argued that the Modernist/Fundamentalist debate
of the 1920s, epitomized by the Scopes 'Monkey' trial, distorted the historical
understanding of the fundamentalist 'movement' which had its origins in
Anglo-American millennial traditions and movements of the nineteenth cen-
tury. In his volume Sandeen traced the revival of British millennial interests
after the French Revolution and the rise of the Irvingites and the Plymouth
Brethren. Central to his story was the contribution of John Nelson Darby
(1800–22) whose distinctive apocalyptic ideas included condemnation of the
churches and promotion of what has been called pre-millennial dispensational-
ism. The latter view divided history into a series of discrete eras. In each of
these 'dispensations' God's mode of operation was different.[75] In the 1860s
and 1870s Darby travelled extensively in the United States as a leader of the
Plymouth Brethren, evangelizing on behalf of his views. Initially he attracted
considerable hostility from opponents, but slowly conservative Protestants
adopted his teachings and circulated them widely through periodicals, such
as *Prophetic Times*, and through the use of prophecy and Bible conferences
that gained great popularity during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[76]

Dispensationalism proved highly compatible with conservative Protestant millennial visions. One of the most prominent statements of pre-millennialism in the period came from the revivalist Dwight L. Moody (1837–99). Moody attacked liberals at the same time that he articulated his own view regarding both conversion and the impending end of the world. He said:

> I don't find any place [in the Bible] where God says the world is to grow better and better, and that Christ is to have a spiritual reign on earth of a thousand years. I find that the earth is to grow worse and worse, and that at length there is to be a separation … I look on this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat, and said to me, 'Moody, save all you can.'[77]

Evangelism and apocalypticism were tied closely together in the minds of conservative Protestants.

Sandeen also underscored how these expanding eschatological interests were nurtured by the accent on biblical literalism growing out of the conservative theological movement centred at Princeton Seminary. All of these concerns were also reflected in the *Scofield Reference Bible* published by Cyrus I. Scofield (1843–1921) in 1909. Scofield's publication included the biblical text side by side with marginalia and notes referencing pre-millennial dispensationalism.[78] He situated the rapture, or rescue, of the Church before the time of tribulation and Christ's return at the end of the present dispensation. The publication record of the *Scofield Reference Bible* provides dramatic proof of the continuing popularity of this approach to eschatology throughout the twentieth century.

This surge of conservative Protestant apocalypticism added new terminology to the vocabulary of millennialism, including the rapture and the tribulation. Yet no broad consensus emerged among these pre-millennial dispensationalists on the timetable of the impending apocalypse. Nevertheless, the pre-millennial advent of Jesus Christ became an increasingly popular belief and one measure of an informal apocalyptic consensus as the fundamentalist movement solidified. More recent scholarship on fundamentalism in this period has confirmed Sandeen's judgment that the movement did not experience a jugular blow in the 1920s. On the contrary, in the decades following the Scopes trial fundamentalists quietly built a network of educational, publication, communication, and para-ecclesiastical organizations resulting in great strength by the 1940s.[79]

Fundamentalists were not the only religious communities holding conservative millennial views during these years. A number of outsider groups identified by distinctive apocalyptic notions also prospered. For example, Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916) founded the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society in 1884, a group that held a unique set of views centring around the second coming of Christ. He contended that Christ had spiritually returned

to the earth in 1874 and that he (Russell) was a chosen end-time messenger. Russell rejected a number of traditional Christian ideas, including the notion of the Trinity and the belief in hell. His movement grew steadily, thanks in part to its aggressive approach to publication and evangelism and to its alternative views regarding social and political issues. In 1931 under Russell's successor, Joseph Rutherford (1869–1942), this society changed its name to the Jehovah's Witnesses.[80]

In the decades after the turn of the twentieth century the Pentecostal movement emerged in the United States. This movement gave rise to a large number of separate denominations. The most distinctive belief uniting all segments of Pentecostalism is the baptism of the Spirit which follows conversion. Spirit baptism, not to be confused with water baptism, is a second experience most frequently evidenced through the ecstatic phenomenon of speaking in tongues. Among the individuals playing a prominent role in the origins of this movement were Charles Fox Parham (1873–1929) who presided over a Bible school in Topeka, Kansas, and William J. Seymour (1870–1922), the son of former slaves, who came under Parham's influence. Seymour subsequently carried these beliefs and practices to Los Angeles where he led a pentecostal awakening known as the Azusa Street Revival. Eschatological ideas generally of the pre-millennial variety permeated this movement. Pentecostals believed they were living in the last days. One self-designation employed by Pentecostals – the 'Latter Rain' – signalled their conviction that the pouring out of God's Spirit and the accompanying signs and miracles marked the approaching end of the ages. Early Pentecostals combined a fervent apocalyptic expectation with a harsh critique of many aspects of American society. With the passage of time, that dissenting theme moderated among Pentecostals, especially those who experienced an upward social mobility.[81]

Other sectarian communities holding alternative apocalyptic views also appeared on the scene during these years. Their millennial visions defy generalization. Among the most controversial was the Peace Mission Movement led by Father Divine (c. 1877–1965), born George Baker, an African American preacher who proclaimed that he was the fulfilment of the prophecies in the Book of Revelation that spoke of God coming to earth and transforming it.[82] A very different message lay at the core of the Nation of Islam, a community that began in Detroit with the efforts of a mysterious prophet named Wallace D. Fard (d. 1934) and continued under his successor Elijah Muhammad (1987–1975), born Elijah Poole. The Nation of Islam, known as the Black Muslims, proclaimed a racial ideology that called for the strict separation of blacks and whites. The Muslim social programme included a strong commitment to self-help and middle-class values and behaviour, but their apocalyptic vision rested on a vision of the ultimate destruction of the

white race and a reassertion of black superiority.[83] The appeal of apocalyptic in America, clearly, was not limited to Christian sectarian groups.

Mid-twentieth Century to the Present

The second half of the twentieth century confirmed the difficulty in attempting to describe America's diverse millennial visions with language forged out of nineteenth-century Protestant culture. The decades since mid-century have witnessed events and crises that have fuelled apocalyptic reflection by those expecting a sudden catastrophic close of the present order. These same years have also seen events and developments that encouraged those anticipating a better future for humankind. Still other observers have drawn selectively from these apparently contradictory data and have formulated idiosyncratic apocalyptic ideas and notions.

Among the events and crises that have fuelled fears of an impending disaster are the Holocaust, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Cold War, the arms race between the communist bloc and the 'free' world, the threat of nuclear war, the Middle East conflicts, the growth of radical fundamentalist movements world-wide, the spread of deadly viruses such as HIV, drug addiction, environmental disasters including such as Love Canal and Chernobyl, global warming, the rise of rogue nations, the outbreak of terrorism at home and abroad, ethnic cleansing in various countries, the use of universal barcodes, the sexual revolution, the New Age movement, and the widespread erosion of traditional values. Among the events and developments that have encouraged visions of a better world are the formation of the United Nations, the expansion of educational opportunities, the Civil Rights movement, agricultural advances, control of diseases such as smallpox and polio, technological progress, medical breakthroughs including wonder drugs and transplant therapies, the exploration of space, the development of tele-vision and computers, the Internet, the environmental movement, new forms of birth control, the ecumenical movement, and the promise of a New World Order. All of these events and other developments, too, have provided grist for prophecies and for apocalyptic visions too numerous to itemize. In what follows I will cite a few select examples to illustrate the continuing attraction that apocalypticism in its broadest sense has exerted in the recent past. Abundant resources exist for the further study of these and many other examples.

A resurgent aggressive form of evangelicalism has prospered during the last fifty years in the United States. From Billy Graham in the late 1950s to the host of preachers filling the airwaves today, many conservative Protestants have made prophecy belief central to their proclamation and have employed

the language and symbols of the apocalyptic tradition to great effect.[84] The Jack Van Impe Ministry is one example of successful electronic outreach; his ministry focuses almost exclusively on eschatological issues.[85] Van Impe has made a vocation out of the apocalyptic interpretation of contemporary news. Scores of other radio and television preachers feature many of the same themes in their programming. The published word has also continued to be a highly successful means of spreading prophetic beliefs. The most successful of such authors in America is Hal Lindsey whose 'fictional' apocalyptic volume entitled *The Late Great Planet Earth*, first published in 1970, had sold more than 28 million copies by 1990.[86] Scores of other religious bestsellers have featured apocalyptic scenarios. Numerous works of literature by America's most distinguished writers also employ and exploit apocalyptic themes.[87] Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* (1963), for example, carried the genre of satire into the realm of apocalyptic in his account of this planet's final moments brought about by the invention of *ice-nine*, a crystal that produced 'a new way for the atoms of water to stack and lock, to freeze'.[88] Vonnegut's novel is fatalistic and hilarious at the same time; it gives voice to his critique of both modernity and religion.

Film is another medium by which apocalyptic notions have been disseminated widely throughout American society. Two different kinds of movies have popularized apocalypticism. Films with explicitly religious themes produced by religious conservatives have warned of impending disasters, the end of the world and Christ's return. The best example is perhaps *Thief in the Night* which has been viewed by tens of millions since its release in 1973.[89] Hollywood has also exploited apocalypticism and has produced a number of blockbuster films on related themes – for example, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and *Armageddon* (1998) – as well as countless 'B' grade movies. Popular music has given voice to many of the same themes, especially in folk, hard rock and heavy metal music. Bob Dylan's lyrics in the 1960s painted more than one scene of apocalyptic horror.[90]

Political leaders have sometimes offered prophetic judgments that have attracted public attention. On more than one occasion Ronald Reagan spoke about his understanding of the nearness of Armageddon based on his reading of Ezekiel and on the likelihood of nuclear weapons being involved with the fulfilment of that prophecy. In 1971 he observed, 'It can't be long now. Ezekiel says that fire and brimstone will be rained upon the enemies of God's people. That must mean that they'll be destroyed by nuclear weapons.'[91] Two members of the Cabinet when Reagan was president, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and Secretary of the Interior James Watts, also voiced positive opinions relating to the idea of an impending end of the present order.

Another variety of apocalypticism in contemporary America has not been reluctant to turn to violence to accomplish its objectives, violence especially directed against racial and ethnic groups. The Christian Identity Movement is a case in point. This group, which is not organized in any clear manner, targets Jews as the descendants of Satan. By contrast, its members see themselves as the true descendants of the biblical tribes of Israel. People of colour are also regarded as inferior. These racial views are part of a larger complex of ideas that includes the notion of an impending apocalypse. Christian Identity members believe they have been chosen to use force against the enemies of God, which often includes government agencies; they see themselves as apocalyptic agents.[92]

Interest in religious apocalypticism is not something on which Protestants or Protestant-oriented groups have a monopoly. Within the Roman Catholic Church in America and elsewhere, the increasingly widespread Marian apparitions often contain explicit apocalyptic warnings. Messages attributed to the Virgin Mary frequently threaten divine displeasure with the current state of the Church and, in particular, with the decline of traditional devotions following the Second Vatican Council. The resurgence of an aggressive Marian cult at such locations in the United States as Bayside, New York; Lubbock, Texas; Conyers, Georgia; and South Phoenix, Arizona, is interpreted by many conservative Catholics as a sign of the impending end of history and an anticipation of Christ's return. The targets against which these Marian messages are directed vary, extending from communism and ecumenism to liberal Catholics and the pope himself.[93]

There have also been apocalyptic expressions of a positive nature during the past several decades. Robert Bellah's celebrated essay on 'Civil Religion' published in 1967 inaugurated a two-decades-long scholarly discussion of the American national myth, a discussion that drew heavily on historical materials. Bellah revealed the diverse forms civil religion has taken in our national experience, from holidays as holy days and the president as a high priest to deep-seated notions that God has chosen the United States for a special role in the larger plan of history. This latter ideology drew heavily on sources sounding themes of American exceptionalism. Critics of civil religion have noted how only select portions of the population have been able to participate wholeheartedly in such an ideology and how other segments of American society have been alienated from this national myth. Despite this criticism, positive apocalyptic notions related to this phenomenon continue to be sounded on multiple occasions, including high school graduation ceremonies and the funerals of national heroes in Arlington Cemetery.[94]

Other versions of the hope for a better world have influenced the nation during these same years. Politicians aspired to build the Great Society.

Internationalists articulated the concept of America as part of a global village. Secular theologians in the 1960s waxed poetic about the promise of modern urban life. City planners dreamed that they could implement such visions of a better life. Scientists designed ways of controlling forces that seemed uncontrollable in earlier ages. Artists create all kinds of imaginary worlds. Educators refused to accept limits to the world of knowledge. Futurists put all of this together and described near utopian prospects, 'if only' …

Occasionally messiah-like figures did arise within religious traditions and promise a better world. For example, Rebbe Menahem Mendel Schneerson (1902–94) of the Lubbavitcher Hasidim viewed historical developments during his lifetime as evidence of progress and divine favour, and he affirmed that the years of his leadership were to be 'an era of historical fulfillment … or even of cosmic completion'.[95] The multifaceted messages of the New Age movement, articulated by masters, gurus, channellers and others regarded as 'gifted', contain very positive readings of present circumstances and future prospects.[96] Charismatic figures frequently dominate outsider groups. It has also been observed that 'feminine leadership' in new religious movements (NRMs) 'has become surprisingly common'.[97]

In recent years most attention has been paid to the highly sensationalized episodes involving three NRMs that have ended in controversial tragedies. In 1978 the mass murder/suicide of some 900-plus members of the Peoples Temple in Jonestown, Guyana, orchestrated by Jim Jones (1931–78), resulted from a revolutionary version of apocalypticism and a collective paranoia. In 1993 the fiery conclusion to the standoff between the Branch Davidians and the federal government in Waco (discussed at the beginning of this essay) brought an end to a community that possessed a distinctive set of apocalyptic ideas derived from Seventh-day Adventist traditions and from David Koresh's own prophetic notions. In 1997 the group suicide carried out by members of the Heaven's Gate, a UFO-oriented community under the leadership of Marshall Applewhite (1930–97) in San Diego, attracted international attention. Applewhite integrated apocalyptic and science fiction into a highly imaginative end-time scenario tied to the appearance of the Hale-Bopp comet.[98] All three of these controversial events were tragic, indeed, but they were not wildly out of step with the apocalyptic scene today. For those who doubt, the Internet provided a staggering amount of contemporary evidence of the plethora of diverse apocalyptic ideas and movements attracting followers in the last years before the turn of the new millennium. In particular, the countless prophecies and predictions of the Web surrounding the Y2K problem demonstrated the almost total integration between religious and secular apocalyptic.[99]

A Concluding Proposal

The traditional language of post-millennialism and pre-millennialism is no longer adequate for the study, analysis and understanding of apocalyptic phenomena and movements in American history. The language of millennialism carries too limited and too fixed a set of assumptions and implications to deal with the wide variety of possible religious and secular forms of apocalypticism. Furthermore, a long tradition of internal debate about terminology among advocates of one or another form of millennialism adds to the difficulty of determining the precise meaning of some of the variant terms. It is important that different terminology be identified that will not prejudice understanding. The new categories need to be descriptively rich, but value-free. They also must be sufficiently comprehensive to deal with the range of observations cited earlier in this essay.

I close with the following proposal. The most useful categories for dealing with apocalypticism in the American historical experience are 'religious apocalypticism' and 'secular apocalypticism'. These two terms represent identifiably discrete realities. The two differ substantially in function. The former involves in some fashion the quest for salvation, righteousness or wisdom, however defined; the latter is by definition limited to temporal goals reflected in society, politics or aesthetics. Both religious apocalypticism and secular apocalypticism focus on the passage of time with judgments concerning the past, the present and the future. Both also exploit and attempt to explain texts and human experiences. Both may involve gradual developments (progressive religious apocalypticism and progressive secular apocalypticism) or sudden events (catastrophic religious apocalypticism and catastrophic secular apocalypticism).[100]

Apocalyptic movements universally seek change and action, transformation of the present order or its culmination. The specific means to those ends may be political action, revolution, warfare, moral reform, spiritual discipline, religious devotions, evangelical outreach, physical regimens, personal sacrifice – to name but a few of the possibilities. These strategies for achieving objectives may be adopted and adapted by either religious or secular apocalyptic movements. What makes all apocalypticism apocalyptic is the unknown that is yet to be revealed with the passage of time.

Millennium, Prophecy and the Energies of Social Transformation: The Case of Nat Turner

Richard H. Brodhead

Prophetic in American Cultural History

In the United States, one of the most powerful expressions of millennial thinking is also one of the most familiar. The lyrics to 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' bear witness that the present world is at an end, secular history is being annihilated as the sacred reasserts its immediate presence, and the Day of the Lord is at hand:

> Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
> He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
> He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword:
> His truth is marching on.
> He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
> He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat;
> Oh! be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!
> Our God is marching on.

In its familiarity this passage serves to underscore a number of points about the place of millennialism in American culture. In the country's history, fantasies of the approaching End have formed a staple marker of the lunatic fringe, the social zone that mainstream culture conceives as antically (when not dangerously) immune to reason and the reality principle. Paul Boyer, our chief connoisseur of what he calls 'end-time kitsch', takes us into this territory when he informs us that the Bible Believers' Evangelistic Association has marketed Rapture wrist watches whose faces are inscribed 'ONE HOUR NEARER THE LORD'S RETURN', or when he chronicles the bumper-sticker many of us have driven past: 'Warning: If the Rapture Occurs, This Car Will Be Driverless'.[1] But 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' reminds us that the

same structure of thought that can seem like prima facie evidence of marginal origins can also be found near the centre of American social thought, built into the most widely disseminated national mythologies and the most widely shared collective possessions – among them, a song every schoolchild knows.

Planted at the margins of American culture yet also in the centre, millennial thought has also led a paradoxical double mode of existence, enjoying in close proximity the empty life of a near-dead idiom and the urgent power of the living Word. Sung without feeling or reflection, as it must have been by millions of people on thousands of occasions, 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' registers what might be called the American routinization of apocalypse, the preservation of the idea of sacred historical crisis in the mode of empty civic formulaics. But this death has been far from terminal, and a concept apparently drained of force has proved susceptible to repeated reactivation. When Martin Luther King stood on the steps of the Alabama state capitol at the conclusion of the march from Selma in 1965, an action that had succeeded in the face of repeated government obstruction and violence, he celebrated the moment in oratory that mounted through a series of exultantly reiterated 'How long? Not long …' clauses to the climactic: 'How long? Not long, cause mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord' – at which point King recited 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic'.[2] The ecstatic faces caught on videotapes make clear that King's audience heard, in the words of this familiar song, the guarantee that the kingdom they had not yet attained was nevertheless near at hand – and it would be a tough character who could listen to the videotape without feeling much the same thing. In this act, King at once reactivated the cultural mythology of the promised American millennium and infused a moment of secular contemporary history with sacred narrative meaning: made one day's success in the Civil Rights movement mean that the Kingdom of God was nigh.

As it underscores these paradoxes, 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' can also remind us that jolting this structure of thought back to life has typically required another ingredient: the conjunction of millennial ideas with the figure of the prophet, or more precisely with the emergence of some actual person to prophetic standing. In his fierce and unwavering conviction of the evil of slavery, John Brown showed the prime trait of prophetic selfhood, the immitigable certainty that he knew the truth. In his acts of holy warfare against this foe, the Pottawatomie massacre of 1856 and the Harper's Ferry raid of 1859, Brown displayed two other essential traits of this type: the sense of being personally appointed to a divinely-inspired mission and the conviction that, since he knew the eternal moral law, he was justified to break mere worldly laws that went against a higher good. In his highly publicized trial, this figure already strongly identified with the prophetic type showed a

genius for what might be called prophetic public relations, projecting a powerfully-drawn image of himself as a divine instrument bearing witness against earthly iniquity. In the shock of his trial and execution, Northern public opinion welcomed Brown into the status he had helped construct, with Ralph Waldo Emerson (for instance) announcing that John Brown made the gallows more glorious than the cross.[3]

John Brown was the original subject of 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic'. After hearing Northern soldiers singing 'John Brown's Body' soon after the start of the Civil War, Julia Ward Howe wrote new lyrics to the song, sublimating Brown's personal prophetic career into a more cosmic vision of millennial national transformation through anti-slavery combat. It is no accident that Martin Luther King was the figure who released this vision to its fullest spiritual resonance in modern times. Of all twentieth-century Americans, King is the one who most successfully established himself before a national audience as a prophet in the full sense, a person who bears authority not by birth, social standing or socially appointed office but by virtue of the fact that he speaks the will of God.[4] King was self-consciously performing the prophetic office of bearing the word when he delivered his post–Selma oration. As typically in his public career, it was the verbal energy and spiritual force of King's prophetic performance that brought vaguely religious concepts to life for his hearers, giving them new historical application to the struggles of the present day.

The figure of the prophet has a particularly long and rich career in the cultural history of the United States. Such figures are by no means an American monopoly. Men and women who have laid claim to prophetic power have come out of many religious traditions and emerged in virtually every land and time. The contemporary crackdown on the Falun Gong sect in China, a movement that has its prophetic leader in Li Hongzhi, is a vivid reminder not just of the ongoing life of the prophetic, but also of the special authority the prophetic can exert and its felt menace to the status quo. But if they are not a proof of American exceptionalism, public assertions of prophetic selfhood have been a peculiarly persistent feature of American life, where they have taken a unusual variety of social manifestations.

Claimants to prophetic status have continued to populate the American world of zanies, crackpots and psychopaths, where they have exerted special fascination for the mainstream that professes to regard them as freakishly 'other'. Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), one of the earliest American novels, made popular entertainment out of the true story of a New York farmer who received a divine appointment to slaughter his wife and children. James Garfield was fatally shot by a person who received a heavenly commission to assassinate the president: Charles Guiteau, whose 1881 trial became

a national fixation. In 1932 the newly-formed Nation of Islam came to public attention through newspaper reports that one of its reported adherents – who may in fact not have been a member – sacrificed a neighbour on a self-erected domestic altar, acting on instructions from 'the Gods of Islam'.[5] My grandfather was shot and nearly killed in 1955 by a man who had received a revelation that bankers were the enemies of God. Jim Jones, who led the 900 residents of Jonestown, Guyana, to their mass suicide in 1978, was claimant to prophetic status. So was David Koresh, whose prophetic community was violently suppressed by government forces at Waco in April 1993. So was the prophet Do (the prophetic name of Marshall 'Herff' Applewhite), who led the Heaven's Gate community to suicidal self-transcendence in the spring of 1997. So was the Unabomber Theodore Kaczyncki, who made no claim to divine inspiration but who is linked to the prophetic syndrome by his conviction that he knew – and was authorized by this knowledge to act on – a higher Truth the self-blinded world ignored.

The interest of the American prophetic tradition lies in the fact that at the same time that it has produced extremities of this sort, it has also manifested itself in figures designated with a very different cultural charge, including ones linked with the high points of American creativity. Together with its crackpots and psychotics, the American prophetic tradition has also produced a succession of strong religious founders, bearers of new revelations that have institutionalized themselves into a new church. Figures in this line would include Mother Ann Lee, the founder of the Shaker movement; Joseph Smith, whose claim to have reopened the experience of revelation established the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Mary Baker Eddy, who chartered the Church of Christ, Scientist in 1879; and Willard Fard and Elijah Muhammad, who founded the Nation of Islam through their assertions of prophetic authority in the new ghettos of the urban North.

A major shaper of the history of American religion, the tradition of prophetic self-assertion has played an equally important role in American politics, where it has lent support to powerful and distinctive traditions of social dissent. The antinomian Anne Hutchinson, disturber of the peace of puritan Boston in the 1630s, pioneered a model of resistance to civil institutions that grounded the right of resistance on the individual's private, personal access to superior moral truth. The prophetic politics that authorizes the self-designated righteous individual to break the world's law to bear witness to a higher law has shaped the contours of many of the country's most important opposition movements. The anti-slavery movement, both in the non-violent form preached by the selfconsciously prophetic William Lloyd Garrison and the pro-violent form modelled by the selfconsciously prophetic John Brown, was the chief nineteenth-century outlet for opposition in the prophetic mode.

The anti-slavery movement had its twentieth-century heir in the Civil Rights movement and its offspring the anti-war movement, modern revivers of the politics of personal righteousness and the ethics of the higher law.

In addition to these manifestations in the domains of politics and religion, in the United States the prophetic has also put its distinctive imprint on the tradition of artistic creation, especially in literature. The great formal innovators among American writers came to their most original work not through an interest in form alone but through the strong sense of personal prophetic calling. The sense of prophetic appointment is breathtakingly overt in Walt Whitman's great experimental volume *Leaves of Grass* (1855), a sustained fantasy of personal godhead that clearly thinks of itself as a new testament, a new-saying of where God is and how he is to be accessed. Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) is a meditation on the prophetic Captain Ahab, a figure who has seen through to a 'lower layer' and so has been reborn as a man with a mission, but this book is itself in some fairly obvious sense a skewed work of prophecy, its ironies deflecting but never disarming the impulse to know and speak what is at the bottom of this world.

This whirlwind tour will suffice, I hope, to give some sense of the curious insistence of the prophetic in American cultural history. Taking its origins from many sources, the figure of the prophet has continued to circulate in the repertoire of American cultural identities, offering one image – a highly eccentric image but, once embraced, a highly compelling one – of something a person could be. If actual prophets have proliferated in America, it is because real men and women have actualized this image of a possible self, identifying with it strongly enough to persuade themselves that they were prophets and persuading others to identify them thus as well – with powerful consequences for the world.

As my examples make clear, the consequences of identifying oneself as a prophet take no predictable or unitary form. To the contrary, the cases I have mentioned suggest that this act is equally conducive to the extremes of creativity and destructiveness – to church-buildings and mass suicides, to moral crusades and massacres, to unbounded artistic imaginings and uncontrolled pathological delusions – with no innate bias to one rather than another. Or we might say that identification with the prophetic has one reliable consequence: the dissolution of the authority felt to lodge in prevailing rules and customs and the creation of the elating sense of one's right, even obligation, to do something that violates existing norms – with results the world calls admirable and results the world calls abominable equally likely outcomes.

Not all prophets bear tidings of this world's end. Though Julia Ward Howe reimagined him in the apocalyptic mode, John Brown did not expect the end of the present world; he worked to right an injustice in the given

world because he thought that world would continue. Though Martin Luther King, Jr was a master of the rhetoric of the return of the redeemed world, King too was no apocalypticist. The cause he preached was a struggle over the shape of this world even if it was guided by otherworldly values, and he envisioned this struggle as an ongoing necessity even when he said its triumph was at hand.

But if the prophetic has manifested itself in non-millennial or even anti-millennial forms, the message of the immanence of the End time has been one of the staple messages of American prophets. And when this idea has been re-energized to its peak levels of elated, dread-filled expectation, this has commonly been the work of a prophet, who speaks this message with the authority of new revelation. The greatest mass manifestation of urgently expectant millennialism in American history, the Millerite movement of the early 1840s, found its prophet in Father William Miller. (The imaginative warmth of this outbreak touched off other prophetic careers: those of Ellen Harmon White, whose visions were institutionalized in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and Sojourner Truth, a Millerite prophetic exhorter before she became an anti-slavery orator.)[6] The Shakers, at their start not primarily a community of celibates or craftsmen but an End time sect, the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, found the spur to their expectation in the prophetic authority of Mother Ann Lee, who was thought 'to have the fullness of the God Head bodily dwelling in her'.[7] The wave of millennial expectation that swept the Native American West in the late 1880s and early 1890s, a movement whose mysterious intensities triggered the massacre of Sioux by government forces at Wounded Knee, had despair and dispossession as its ultimate cause, but its immediate catalyst was the vision experienced by the Paiute Jack Wilson, who took the prophetic name Wovoka. It has been revealed to me that the apparently inevitable present order will last but a little time, Wovoka told an eager audience that extended from Nevada east through the Dakotas. The redeemed world is coming back to historical reality and with it our vanished people – not tomorrow, perhaps, but very soon. 'Dont tell no white man. Jesus was on ground, he just like cloud. Every body is alive again, I dont know when they will [be], maybe this fall or in spring.'[8]

This essay studies the interactions of prophetism and millennialism by looking at a striking historical case: the career of Nat Turner, leader of nineteenth-century America's major slave revolt. It is not my claim that Nat Turner's case is representative in the sense that it captures millennial-prophetic dynamics in some general, transhistorical way. Turner's prophetic career draws on a range of topoi in cultural operation far beyond his local world, and part of the interest of his case lies in the use he makes of ways of conceptualizing

selfhood that have led a much larger social life. At the same time, his career underlines the fact that the schemas of the prophetic are put into action only when some actual person lives his life into them, realizing them with the energy of his idiosyncratic being. He also reminds us that when a person realizes the prophetic in personal experience, he activates this identity in some particular social location, which gives it its range of reference and field of action. Nat Turner had the experience of millennial prophetic vision within the confines of American slavery, with the result that this familiar otherworldly imagining generated, in his case, a distinctive this-worldly consequence: a plan to end the reality of slavery by a slave's own violent act.

The Confessions of Nat Turner

The story of the Nat Turner rebellion is quickly told. In Southampton County, Virginia, an economic and cultural backwater bordered on the south by North Carolina and the east by the Dismal Swamp, on the evening of 21 August 1831, after a communal meal partaking equally of the qualities of a barbecue and an initiation ceremony, the slave Nat Turner and a group of six chosen followers broke into the house of Joseph Travis, Turner's master, and axed to death every member of the family, including a sleeping infant who at first escaped their notice. Through the night and the next day the slave contingent, its numbers growing as it proceeded, moved from house to house across the neighbourhood performing similar massacres until fifty-five whites had been killed. His force now grown to 'fifty or sixty, all mounted and armed with guns, axes, swords, and clubs' (p. 313),[9] Turner tried to march his new-formed army on the county seat three miles distant, a town by amazing bad luck named Jerusalem. On the way they were met and routed by a counter-force of aroused whites who turned victory into counter-massacre. As his troops melted away, the Turner accomplices who were not killed immediately were captured, tried and quickly executed. Turner hid himself beneath a pile of fence rails for six weeks but was then captured, tried and executed in his turn.[10]

The uprising of 21–23 August 1831 was an emphatically local event. Its rampage did not move outside an area five or six miles in diameter. There is also no convincing evidence that Turner's band was, as hysterical whites imagined, in conspiratorial touch with slaves in other areas. But if its sphere of action was tightly contained, the Nat Turner uprising had far-reaching social repercussions. In regions where slavery had become a maturely developed system, the Southampton revolt formed the one successful slave revolt in United States history, the single uprising not detected and neutralized in advance. After it erupted, this event compounded itself with the slaveholders'

abiding fear that slaves would rise against their masters in vindictive retribution, so that it lived on as both a historical memory and the confirmation of a dreadful suspicion. As news of the uprising travelled through the South, it touched off panicky reprisals in which over one hundred slaves (possibly many more) were killed – slaves who had no contact with Turner except the fact that *as* slaves they could be suspected of harbouring his revolutionary intentions.[11]

This wave of violence eventually subsided, but the memory of Turner's rebellion continued to inspire unnerving insecurity about the hidden potentials of slaves. A Virginia legislator caught the paranoia the event unleashed when he spoke of the 'suspicion that a Nat Turner might be in every family; that the same bloody deed might be acted over at any time and in any place'. After the revolt a doleful citizen of Jerusalem wrote even more starkly: 'All agree, that they can never again feel safe, never again be happy.'[12] Though it alone did not cause such changes, this revolt and the fear it inspired also helped drive the general turn in the management of slavery that dates from the early 1830s: the paradoxical double change by which the daily lives of slaves were rendered somewhat more humane even as their access to the instruments of independence were sharply curtailed. Laws passed in the wake of the Turner rebellion restricted black preaching and forbade separate religious gatherings for slaves; restricted the teaching of reading and writing to slaves; outlawed group assembly by free negroes; and required freed slaves to leave the state.[13]

The leader who produced these effects remains a mysterious figure: at the end of his study of this subject, Turner's biographer Stephen Oates still speaks of him as 'a gifted and furious unknown'.[14] As with many slaves, few materials exist to establish the facts of Turner's life, so that large parts of it remain wholly obscure. And there is no access to the part of Turner we most want to grasp – his mind, the world of his understandings and intentions – except one document that is itself highly problematic.

The Confessions of Nat Turner, a pamphlet published within two weeks of Turner's hanging, presents all the usual perplexities of autobiography as to what is an authentic transcript of inward experience, what a construction of the self within the medium of words. In this case these difficulties are compounded by the fact that Turner's confession comes to us at second-hand. His statement was taken down in prison by the lawyer Thomas R. Gray, who claims in his preface that Turner 'was willing to make a full and free confession' and that he (Gray) 'determined … to commit his statements to writing, and publish them, with little or no variation, from his own words' (p. 303). An attached certificate signed by officers of the court seeks to heighten the reliability of the document by attesting that the confession was 'read to [Turner] in our presence, and that Nat acknowledged the same to be

full, free, and voluntary' (p. 305). (The attestation reminds us that this autobiography was also a legal document and its authenticity *as* autobigraphy the means to legal incrimination. Turner was hanged on the basis of the confession we read.) In spite of such assurances, melodramatic flourishes describing Turner as a fiendlike fanatic and gleeful shedder of blood make clear that Gray is in part the creator of the Nat Turner of the *Confessions*, not just his recorder. But the extent of Gray's inventions and distortions remains impossible to verify, so that we will never be sure which of Gray's words were Turner's or how truly they capture Turner's life.

Still, as Eric Sundquist correctly notes, while 'we may read Turner's "Confessions" as if it were Gray's text … it is never possible *not* to read it also as Turner's',[15] and there are compelling reasons to accept the truthfulness of the account. This document's telling of the uprising is corroborated by other sources and does not deviate from known facts. The visionary origins of Turner's leadership also cannot be Gray's entire invention, since they were reported by others before Gray took Turner's statement.[16] But the most important reason to regard Turner's confession as authentic does not lie in external validations. It lies instead in the quality of the text. The person who speaks in *The Confessions of Nat Turner* is possessed of a powerfully sustained and intricately coherent subjectivity, a character so strongly marked that it would have taken a genius to invent it. If the Nat Turner of the *Confessions* is a literary invention, then Thomas R. Gray is an unknown literary giant, the American Dostoyevsky. Further, the uprising was by all accounts the work of a *leader*, someone able to mobilize others through his strength of mind and force of personality; and the speaker of the *Confessions* possesses just this personal force.

We can never be sure that we know the real Nat Turner, then, but the *Confessions* brings us knowledge of an inwardness whose authenticity is also hard to doubt. This speaker wants to put himself on record and has very definite ideas of what his life story is. In the second half of his confession this is the story of his acts, 'the work of death' that he visited on his enslavers. But as the *Confessions* is put together these acts follow from and complete a prior action, the formation of Nat Turner's prophetic self, so that the whole story of Turner's identity lies in this plot: how I found my prophetic calling and so led slaves to kill their masters.

One of the great contributions to the American literature of the prophetic, the *Confessions* is told by a self who feels specially individuated or divinely singled out. For the speaker of this document, to say who I AM is to tell how I came to the knowledge that 'I was intended for some great purpose' (p. 306). Eventually, this knowledge forms a core of a powerful internal conviction, but as Turner tells it this confident inward identification is built

through a long history of circumstantial experiences and has a strong social dimension. 'In my childhood,' he begins, 'a circumstance occurred which made an indelible impression on my mind, and laid the ground work of that enthusiasm [here Gray's voice obviously cuts in] which has terminated so fatally to many.'

> Being at play with other children, when three or four years old, I was telling them something, which my mother overhearing, said it had happened before I was born – I stuck to my story, however, and related somethings which went, in her opinion, to confirm it – others being called on were greatly astonished, knowing that these things had happened, and caused them to say in my hearing, I surely would be a prophet, as the Lord had shewn me things that had happened before my birth. And my mother and father strengthened me in this my first impression, saying in my presence, I was intended for some great purpose. (p. 306)

The story of my beginning for Nat Turner is the story of my first manifestation as a wonderchild: an event that involves an unselfconscious display of his special powers, then the reception and interpretation of those powers *as* special by his family and a larger audience of 'others'. This community is furnished with a concept of prophetic or magically gifted selfhood (the concept's roots in this case are of partly African descent)[17] and it grasps the child through this category, the child then internalizing this identification as a 'strengthened impression' of who he is. This mutually reinforcing cycle of external designation and self-recognition is repeated in a series of episodes, for instance in Turner's acquisition of literacy. In Turner's redaction this familiar slave narrative scene becomes a showcase for the display of power and the reception back of communal 'wonder':

> The manner in which I learned to read and write, not only had great influence on my own mind, as I acquired it with the most perfect ease, so much so, that I have no recollection whatever of learning the alphabet – but to the astonishment of my family, one day, when a book was shewn me to keep me from crying, I began spelling the names of different objects – this was a source of wonder to all in the neighborhood, particularly the blacks[.] (p. 307)

Going forward from these beginnings, Nat Turner emerges as something like the designated 'brains' of the black community and is elevated to a quasi-official role as community strategic planner: 'such was the confidence of the negroes in the neighborhood, even at this early period of my life, in my superior judgment, that they would often carry me with them when they were going on any roguery, to plan for them' (p. 307). Since the community regards Nat's intelligence as in some measure preternatural, their recognition

of his gifts confers not just intellectual and social status but reinforcement of the theory of occult powers. His community's accumulating interpretation surrounds him to support that 'confidence of my superior judgment' that in Emersonian self-reliance would be wholly inwardly established; and in keeping with this more socially constructed model of the origins of the prophetic self, Turner begins to play to the public image of electness that he had taken in from his social world. He becomes a performer of the part of prophet, conscious manipulator of the theatrics of a social role: 'Having soon discovered [that] to be great, I must appear so, and therefore studiously avoided mixing in society, and wrapped myself in mystery, devoting my time to fasting and prayer' (p. 307).

At this point in Turner's narrative, the 'Divine inspiration' that has been something like a social myth of his identity abruptly literalizes itself into a new mode of experience. The sentence just cited continues (or discontinues):

> – by this time, having arrived to man's estate, and hearing the scriptures commented on at meetings, I was struck with that particular passage which says: 'Seek ye the kingdom of Heaven and all things shall be added unto you.' I reflected much on this passage, and prayed daily for light on this subject – As I was praying one day at my plough, the spirit spoke to me, saying 'Seek ye the kingdom of Heaven and all things shall be added unto you.' Question [by Thomas Gray]: what do you mean by the Spirit. Ans[wer by Turner]: The Spirit that spoke to the prophets in former days – and I was greatly astonished, and for two years prayed continually, whenever my duty would permit – and then again I had the same revelation, which fully confirmed me in the impression that I was ordained for some great purpose in the hands of the Almighty. (pp. 307–8)

An experience that began in the social transactions of identity-formation abruptly transforms itself, here, into an encounter with the sacred. We are suddenly back in the prophetic world literally asserted, the world where the Spirit manifests itself directly to human consciousness. Turner's is the kind of contact claimed by Anne Hutchinson, whose reply to the magistrate who asked how she knew which ministers had divine authority – 'by an immediate revelation … By the voice of his own spirit to my soul' – he unknowingly echoes. It is the kind of eruption of transcendence that Joseph Smith experienced in his inaugural 1820 vision, which shares uncanny similarities with Turner's. Turner, like Smith a farm labourer and worker in others' fields, like Smith propels himself towards an encounter with the sacred through a prior act of a biblical fixation, a mounting obsession in which he finds or is found by a scriptural verse that promises to open the kingdom if he will seek. Turner's obsessional text is Luke 12: 31, 'Seek ye the kingdom

of Heaven'; Smith's was the closely related James 1: 5, 'If any of you lack
wisdom, let him ask of God … and it shall be given him.' 'Never did any
passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did
at this time to mine,'[18] Smith had said in words Turner could echo. In
Turner's case, the Spirit's voice literally repeats as divine speech the message
he first encountered in the printed book.

His sense of ordination for 'some great purpose' having been revalidated
by direct spiritual experience, Turner now begins to strain towards this highly-
charged futurity and imagine its shape. Expectancy at this point ignites a
second order of vision, this one a full-fledged revelation. 'And about this time
I had a vision – and I saw white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle,
and the sun was darkened – and thunder rolled in the Heavens, and blood
flowed in streams – and I head a voice saying, "Such is your luck, such you
are called to see, and let it come rough or smooth, you must surely bare it"'
(pp. 308–9). In a second transmutation of scriptural text into pure vision,
Turner (such is his luck!) *sees* the apocalypse of the Book of Revelation, and
the psychic energy this vision produces is such that revelation now breeds
revelation with accelerating urgency and pace.

> After this revelation in the year of 1825, and the knowledge of the elements
> being made known to me, I sought more than ever to obtain true holiness before
> the great day of judgment should appear, and then I began to receive the true
> knowledge of faith. And from the first steps of righteousness until the last, I
> was made perfect; and the Holy Ghost was with me, and said, 'Behold me as
> I stand in the Heavens' – and I looked and saw the forms of men in different
> attitudes – and there were lights in the sky to which the children of darkness
> gave other names than what they really were – for they were the lights of the
> Savior's hands, stretched forth from east to west, even as they were extended
> on the cross on Calvary for the redemption of sinners. And I wondered greatly
> at these miracles, and prayed to be informed of a certainty of the meaning
> thereof – and shortly afterwards, while laboring in the field, I discovered drops
> of blood on the corn as though it were dew from heaven – and I communicated
> it to many, both white and black, in the neighborhood – and I then found on
> the leaves in the woods hieroglyphic characters, and numbers, with the forms
> of men in different attitudes, portrayed in blood, and representing the figures
> I had seen before in the heavens. And now the Holy Ghost had revealed itself
> to me, and made plain the miracles it had shown me – For as the blood of
> Christ had been shed on this earth, and had ascended to heaven for the salvation
> of sinners, and was now returning to earth again in the form of dew – and as
> the leaves on the trees bore the impression of the figures I had seen in the
> heavens, it was plain to me that the Savior was about to lay down the yoke he

had borne for the sins of men, and the great day of judgment was at hand. (p. 309)

An anonymous correspondent writing from Jerusalem before Turner was apprehended spoke of him as 'perhaps misled by some hallucination of his imagined spirit of prophecy'.[19] Hallucinative this passage surely is, but we could just as accurately call it visionary. But however we might diagnose or categorize it, to its witness it is a vision simply of what *is*: a revelation in which the profane or natural and the sacred or spiritual world are both precisely seen yet perfectly fused, such that figures in the sky are doubled in the leaves of trees, the blood of the redeemer is found on the ears of the corn, the planets and stars are the saviour's hands, and the time right now is the time of the millennial end.

While Joseph Smith was translating the *Book of Mormon* with his disciple Oliver Cowdery, a burst of spiritual elation moved him to baptize Cowdery in the Susquehanna River. In a strikingly parallel event, Nat Turner gives expression to the joy of this vision by reinstituting, on his own inspired authority, the sacrament of baptism. Having miraculously healed his white neighbour Etheldred T. Brantley, Turner receives word from the Spirit that 'as the Savior had been baptised so should we also – and when the white people would not let us be baptised by the church, we went down into the water together, in the sight of many who reviled us, and were baptised by the Spirit' (pp. 309–10). In the wake of this highly-charged event Turner receives his climactic vision, in which the 'great work laid out for me to do' (p. 310) is at long last made known. A final long quotation will bring this history of vision to its end.

> And on the 12th of May, 1828, I heard a loud noise in the heavens, and the Spirit instantly appeared to me and said the Serpent was loosened, and Christ had laid down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and that I should take it on and fight against the Serpent, for the time was fast approaching when the first should be last and the last should be first … And by signs in the heavens that it would be made known to me when I should commence the great work – and until the first sign appeared, I should conceal it from the knowledge of men – And on the appearance of the sign, (the eclipse of the sun last February) I should arise and prepare myself, and slay my enemies with their own weapons. (p. 310)

Two features of this narrative of vision should be noted here. The first is that, up until the appearance of this stunning last phrase, there is little that is unusual about Nat Turner's spiritual transactions. Although our habit of separating the history of slavery, the history of dissident social movements

and the history of religion has obscured this fact, Nat Turner's spiritual eruptions share central features with the experiences of several of his contemporaries. Between Turner's appointment to fight the Serpent in May 1828 and the confirming eclipse in 1831, the New York businessman Elijah Pierson heard the Voice of God on Wall Street informing him that he was not really Elijah Pierson but a reborn version of the Prophet Elijah. June 1830 is when Robert Matthews received the divine knowledge that God was about to dissolve all the institutions of men, a knowledge that compelled him to baptize his wife in the Holy Spirit and to proclaim himself the Prophet Matthias. Joseph Smith, who must have been deciphering his new scripture on the very day of Turner's 1828 vision, received his heavenly commission to move the Latter-day Saints to Kirtland, Ohio, in January 1831, one month before the appearance of Nat Turner's sign. ('I am Joseph the Prophet,' Smith announced as he arrived in Kirtland, in an idiom Turner would have found familiar.) In Kirtland in the spring of 1831, several new Mormon converts had revelations and saw visions with 'wonderful lights in the air and upon the ground'.[20]

To have seriously thought oneself 'commissioned by Jesus Christ and proceed[ing] under his inspired directions'[21] makes one a much less abnormal figure in 1830s America (perhaps in any America) than we might initially have assumed; and the millennialism of Nat Turner's visions was also an American commonplace. Joseph Smith thought his restoration of prophecy a sign of the approach of the End of days, a message registered in the title 'Latter-day Saints'. Matthias preached that the Father's Kingdom had begun on 20 June 1830 and that the secular world would be destroyed in 1851. Father Miller, who calculated that the world would end in 1843, began preaching the coming millennium in 1831 – the very year of Nat Turner's rebellion.

It helps to recognize these wider cultural bearings of Turner's religious experience. Though Turner surely fused them with African-derived spiritual elements, the religious life recounted in the *Confessions* designates as its major source a strain of Christian millennialism active in his time in many American settings far removed from slavery.[22] But if Nat Turner's experience is not different in content from that of countrymen of many other backgrounds, it is important to underline that he experienced this experience from the position of a slave – a different social position that made this same content take on different meanings and operations. Although I have not mentioned it so far, the great fact of his existence for Turner, the fact that he is conscious of in every moment of selfconsciousness, is not a single but a double one: the fact that he is the object of special divine promise and at the same time is a slave. Because of this duality, every moment of prophetic self-knowledge in the

Confessions functions simultaneously in relation to his knowledge of his en-slavement. His early evidences of precocity thus carry the double meaning that 'the Lord had shewn me things' and that he is not meant to be a slave: noticing Nat's preternatural intelligence, his master early remarks that he 'had too much sense to be raised, and if I was, I would never be of any service to any one as[,] a slave' (p. 307). After his first vision he writes: 'Now finding I had arrived to man's estate, and was a slave, and these revelations being made known to me, I began to direct my attention to this great object, to fulfill the purpose for which, by this time, I felt assured I was intended' (p. 308). Here as usual the language of selfhood is the language of conviction and special purpose, but it is the awareness of his continuing enslavement – his 'finding … [that] I was a slave' – that drives him towards obsessional investment in his special purpose. His 1825 vision of an apocalypse in which blood flows in streams is no bloodier than many versions of this intrinsically violent fantasy, but as it plays in the theatre of his mind, the final showdown between the evil forces that have usurped control of this world and the forces of redemption that will soon destroy them cannot *not* suggest a racial war: Turner sees 'white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle'. To find himself enlisted as the potential hero of this millennial struggle, he who is to fight against the Serpent, is to see himself as the performer at once of a Christian spiritual and a racial inversion: 'for the time was fast approaching when the first should be last and the last should be first' (p. 310).

It is well known that religious millennialism makes a particularly volatile combination with oppression and that groups under severe cultural assault have seized on millennial fantasies as a tool for recovering hope and mobilizing resistance.[23] The Nation of Islam, the black millennial religion fed by the diaspora to Northern urban ghettoes, would form a modern American exhibit of this international phenomenon. Wovoka's Ghost Dance, another millennial religion promising a turn of the racial tables to a desperate people, supplies an example from a different social setting. Turner finds his closest social cognates in the tradition of millennial prophets for the oppressed. One interest of his confession is that it enables us to study at close range how this highly portable religious mythos actually catalyses rebellious action out of the suffer-ing of oppression.

Turner's visions vividly show how this eschatological frame takes the known facts of daily social life up into itself and resignifies them. What Turner sees is the white-and-black landscape of a slaveholding society, except those parties have been imaginatively fused with the contestants in cosmic battle, which now says what they are and mean. In addition to providing an analysis of his situation that makes slavery be God's enemy the Serpent, the fusion of familiar social reality with a millennial frame also has the effect of attaching

a massive psychic energy to this social analysis. Through this fusion, two potentially separate pools of emotional energy – the rages and resentments attached to his status as slave and the longings and elations inspired by the coming of the End – are brought to a white heat and combined with one another, mixing their energies while also conflating or confusing their objects.

Through this process the envisioned violence that means one thing in the context of apocalypse transfers that charge to the world of local, personal action, with harrowing results. Within the visionary world of Nat Turner's slave millennialism, violence unleashed so lavishly that blood will flow in streams is the means by which the holy will purge the world of the unholy, the sign that redemption and judgment are even now at hand. Blood becomes the very element of resurgent holiness: blood spurting all over familiar nature, types and characters of the apocalypse written everywhere in blood, announce and proclaim that His Kingdom Comes. To kill your enemies, within this resignifying vision, becomes the very essence of sanctity. That 'I should arise and slay my enemies with their own weapons' becomes a holy errand, 'the great work laid out for me'; and my violent assault on those now in control of the world becomes, just in the measure of its bloodiness, the act by which the saving turn of history is to be performed.

Historically, the prophetic has a deep association with violence. George Fox, the prophetic founder of Quakerism, once saw the streets of Lichfield, England, awash in blood. Prophetic contemporaries of Turner realized such carnage on an appalling scale. Hong Xiuquan, God's Chinese son (as he thought), led a prophetic insurgency, the Taiping uprising, in which perhaps 20 million people were killed. Closer to home, John Brown, who was born the same year as Turner, extended the idea of holy war into actual massacres and visualized further slaughter as the means to divine social cleansing. Brown's last words were: 'I John Brown am now quite *certain* that the crimes of this *guilty land: will*; never be purged *away*, but by Blood. I had *as I now think: vainly* flattered myself that without *very much* bloodshed it might be done.'[24] When this prophecy of 'very much bloodshed' came to reality in the Civil War, Julia Ward Howe read the carnage as a sacrament of returning holiness: 'He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored.' In *The Confessions of Nat Turner* we can watch prophetic holiness in the act of exciting and unbinding prophetic violence. But in this case (and not this case alone), this same conjunction produced not just a massacre but the enabling condition for social resistance.

We sometimes think of social situations as so manifestly iniquitous that it would seem inevitable that men and women would rise up to overthrow them. But the absence of revolts in the history of American slavery shows that oppression alone was never a sufficient cause for organized attack on an

oppressive social system. To precipitate actual rebellion, certain things need to be added to deprivation however intense. One is a way of conceptualizing the current situation that identifies its evils so as to permit the envisioning of change. The millennial model gave Turner his means to think the evil of slavery together with the conflict that would end it. Another is the mobilization of energies that can overcome passivity and despondency and work to make a change – a release also effected for Turner by the workings of the millennial model.

But in addition to a plan of action and the energies to enact the plan, at least one more thing is needed to facilitate serious rebellion, namely something to justify rebellious self-assertion and its violence of means. Historically this justificatory mechanism has taken many forms. For Toussaint l'Ouverture, a generation before Nat Turner the leader of the most successful slave revolt in the Western hemisphere, such justification derived principally from the French revolutionary ideology of the Rights of Man, that proclamation of universal human rights that was ironically imported into Haiti along with French colonial control and that supplied the unforeseen means to assert the rights of the enslaved. Modern insurgencies have founded the right of revolution on a range of cultural authorities from the American Declaration of Independence to Marxist-Leninism and beyond. Judging by the *Confession*, Nat Turner has little recourse to any of these secular sources. His millennialism is what he has to turn the killing of others from a wrong to a right.[25]

It needs to be emphasized that what is at stake here is not the securing of moral approbation in some abstract or technical sense. As Turner's case shows, the impulse to resistance needs to overcome a powerful counterforce – not just the force of inertia or acquiescence but an internal resistance to violence itself. *The Confessions of Nat Turner* gives oblique but compelling evidence of this counter-impulse. Turner reveals that, having seen the sign of a solar eclipse, 'the seal was removed from my lips' and he began active conspiratorial planning, with the intention 'to have begun the work of death on the 4th July last' (p. 310). July 4 is the day Thoreau chose to take up residence at Walden and the day Whitman chose to publish *Leaves of Grass*; no one is more patriotic than American prophets, who continue to use the national Independence Day to declare a more radical independence. But having chosen his day, Turner continues: 'Many were the plans formed and rejected by us, and it affected my mind to such a degree, that I fell sick, and the time passed without our coming to any determination how to commence' (p. 310). A second heavenly sign – an uncanny dimming of the sun during which a large black sunspot could be seen – finally set the uprising in motion. But until that message came, the planned revolt failed to pass into action, and in Turner's account it seems to have been the planning itself that suspended or

disabled action: 'many were the plans formed and rejected by us, and it affected my mind to such a degree, that I fell sick'.

We can only speculate on the combination of ingredients that fed into Turner's sickness and pause. The strain of planning and anxiety about the plan's success must have formed a major element. It seems likely that he was also sickened at the spectacle of bloodshed as the idea of it drew closer to a reality. Throughout the massacre Turner was strangely squeamish, the leader in inciting others to kill but behindhand in performing the work of death himself.

But another pause-inducing ingredient must have been imperfect certainty about the authority of his vision and so about the justification that it could give. Here we might use one strange case to diagnose another. According to his court testimony, when Charles Guiteau found himself divinely commanded to assassinate President Garfield in 1881, he entered the classic prophetic state (Kierkegaard explored it in *Fear and Trembling*) in which an act known to be wrong and forbidden in one moral frame is made simultaneously right and obligatory in another. Had I not been divinely appointed to kill the President, Guiteau explained to the court, my act would have been murder and 'no punishment would be too severe … for me'. But 'acting as the agent of the Deity … puts a different construction on the act', means that he did not commit murder but instead 'executed the divine will'.

But if Guiteau sounds confident of this distinction, he also testified that after he first received the inspiration for this act, he still did not perform the shooting for two weeks. 'For two weeks I was in doubt,' he explains. 'I was finding out during those two weeks whether it was God's will or not … I wanted to know whether it was the Deity that inspired me. I kept praying that the Deity should not let me make a mistake … because all my natural feelings were opposed to the act.'[26] The gap that opens between the intention and the act for Nat Turner must have been at least in part a product of this sort of prophetic suspense. This is a suspense not just about whether the act can or should be performed but specifically about what it will mean: whether or not it is with certainty appointed, and so whether its violence will be righteous or transgressive.

Taking the measure of this pause reminds us that though it is easy to speak of a religious vision inciting and exonerating violence, at its outset any instance of revolutionary violence is likely to be accompanied by emotional turbulence in which the wish to kill and the dream of justified killing contend with powerful psychic opponents. Meeting and overcoming such opposition was one achievement of Nat Turner's prophetic vision. In its historical life the prophetic has had one of its principal functions as a means of emboldening, a cultural resource that gives individuals the courage to do things

known to the world at large (and to the prophet himself in non-prophetic moments) as insane or wrong, in the confidence that this other way is in fact not wrong but right. Since it is so easy from our distance to think of slavery as wrong, it is worth the effort to remind ourselves how powerful an inversion Nat Turner had to perform to come to the conviction that he was right to rise against it. Turner lived in a world in which it was usual for whites to be masters and blacks their slaves, and so where slavery had the authority of normality even for those who detested being slaves. In Turner's culture the prohibition of violence against masters must have been further supported by many social taboos, not least the primal injunction 'Thou shalt not kill'. Positioned as he was, he also had little access to any confident group consensus to establish the right of violent resistance. In this situation, Turner's personalized religion supplied the alternative ground for his highly idiosyncratic turn of thought. By taking what had at first been the religion of the masters absolutely seriously, by believing this faith so deeply that personal prophetism and apocalypse became real possibilities and even immanent realities, Turner was able to generate the otherwise unsupported conviction that killing his enslavers was his holy obligation – to use a Melville term, a sane madness capable of overturning the (insane) 'sanity' that established slavery as the legitimate order.

If Nat Turner's revolt had led to the overthrow of American slavery, he would surely be enrolled in the front ranks of American heroes. It did not – and it might be noted that the model of revolution that he availed himself of had something to do with this failure. After the revolt was quashed but before Turner was apprehended, a commentator from Jerusalem wrote that Turner's 'object was freedom and indiscriminate carnage his watchward [sic]', then added: 'The seizure of Jerusalem, and the massacre of its inhabitants, was with him, a chief purpose, & seemed to be his ultimatum; for farther, he gave no clue to his design.'[27] Nat Turner's wish to march on Jerusalem must have been inspired by the meaning 'Jerusalem' took on in his millennialist visionary fusions far more than by the strategic value of this sleepy county seat. But beyond the march on Jerusalem, there is not only 'no clue' to Turner's design but no evidence that he had a further plan or object, however vague.

Commenting on this fascinating blackout of intention, Turner's biographer Stephen Oates writes that 'there are indications that Nat expected God to guide him after the insurrection began, just as the Almighty had directed the prophets of old in their bloody, Bible-day wars'.[28] This is generally right, but if we take Turner's narrative seriously Oates's account can be sharpened. It would be perfectly consistent with Turner's way of envisioning his revolt to have expected the Spirit to guide the unfolding action. Indeed in his vision his work of 'slaying my enemies' would have vanquished the Serpent and

brought the Judgment Day to hand, obviating the need for further acts or plans. To believe in his vision to the fullest extent was in this way literally to see no need for the strategic planning that might have built an initial burst of violence into an insurrectionary campaign. The literalism of the imagination that was Turner's source of strength cut two ways, this is to suggest. Grasping the millennial scenario so powerfully as to make the vision become his reality gave Turner the sense of justification and so the courage to undertake his revolt. It was arguably the same act of mind that made his revolt trail off into a dead end.

Not that it would have been easy for a larger slave insurrection to have succeeded in the American South in 1831; and not that Turner's campaign altogether failed. Turner did not free any slaves and he certainly did not bring about the last judgment, but he did cast a continuing shadow over slavery. His enduring work was the anxiety he inspired: the dread he created that any slave however accommodating might be a Nat Turner down deep. If we think of this anxiety as an essential part of what Turner accomplished, it will be clear that he accomplished it through a double means. He created it through the revolt itself, but also through his participation in the *Confessions*, which kept his scary history in continuing public circulation.

Eric Sundquist has proposed that we should consider the *Confessions* as a strategic extension of Turner's rebellion – in effect, a further terrorist act.[29] I find this suggestion persuasive, but I do not believe that Turner primarily told his story to create terror, however effectively it may have played this role. Turner's self-recounting belongs to the great prophetic genre of the testamentary narrative. Like such other members of this genre as Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* or the announcements of Joseph Smith's visions in the Mormon *Doctrines and Covenants* or Thoreau's *Walden* or Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, the intention of Turner's work is to tell the history of his relation to a saving life-source, the story of an actual person's intercourse with the ground of being. Turner unlike these other authors could not fully control his written testament; the lawyer and the judicial system were its official writers. But Turner could effectively control his story by meaning something different from what his transcribers had in mind that was sufficiently close to their intentions to meet both sides' disparate needs. The lawyer and the court wanted his confession – that is, his acknowledgement of guilt before a legal tribunal. So he offered them his confession – a profession of his beliefs and the story of how he came to them. (Turner's autobiography shares a title with Augustine's.) The court wanted his testimony – that is, his statement of what he knew about a matter before the court. He complied by giving testimony: by testifying to the experience of his faith. The court wanted him as a witness – a person summoned to establish the truth of a criminal

matter. Nat Turner agreed to bear witness; to say what in the deepest sense he *knew*.

The most important of the plays of double senses that infuse *The Confessions of Nat Turner* involves the concept of the prophetic itself. The strategy of Turner's white interlocutors was never to deny his claim to prophetic status but rather to make this claim a chief weapon against him. The earliest accounts of his rebellion interpret Turner's prophetism under the sign of fraud. As early-1830s anti-Mormon pamphets did with Joseph Smith, these accounts identify Turner as 'a would-be Prophet [who] used all the arts familiar to such pretenders, to deceive, delude, and overawe', presenting his bloody hieroglyphics as a particularly crude example of his tricks: 'he traced his divination in characters of blood, on leaves alone in the woods; he would arrange them in some conspicuous place, have a dream telling him of the circumstance; and then send some ignorant black to bring them to him, to whom he would interpret their meaning'.[30]

In later weeks a different strategy emerged, namely to use Turner's visions as evidence of derangement – a verdict that had the comfort of making his revolt a freakish aberration, not an expression of a normal desire to be free. When Turner was captured, thus, the Norfolk, Virginia, newspaper reported that 'his profanity in comparing his pretended prophecies with passages in Holy Scripture should not mentioned, if it did not afford proof of his insanity'.[31] To this writer Turner's sense of divine appointment is prima facie evidence that he is crazy; if it were not, this fact would be so disturbing that it 'should not be mentioned'. Thomas Gray's introduction and conclusion to the *Confessions* make clear that he too intends to publish Nat Turner in the figure of the religious maniac or 'complete fanatic'. This strategy is what gives Nat Turner his opening to tell the history of his divine appointment – proof to them of his derangement, but to him of his extraordinary spiritual privilege.

If *The Confessions of Nat Turner* succeeded in creating terror in slaveowners, as it surely did, it must have done so through the force of Turner's testamentary sincerity as much as through any wish to scare. What gives the text its peculiar effectiveness is its air of immense and grave conviction, its sense of obligation to give what Thoreau called 'a sincere account of his own life'. Its power also derives from its portrayal of the black slave not just as would-be killer but specifically as prophetic killer; someone who finds the commission to violent revolt in the very religion that slaves and masters share. You can make a man a slave and you can make a slave a Christian, this text implicitly says, but these acts cannot guarantee the security of the slave system. For a believer might invest more force of personality in his religion than sensible people have in mind, might in other words become (in one lexicon) a 'complete

fanatic' or (in another) an authentic prophet. And this prophet might then bear witness to the need for slaves to be free, bear witness in words and deeds. Nat Turner's historical distinction is that he fused the experience of prophecy with hatred of bondage and so gave prophetic authority to slave rebellion. The rebellion of August 1831 is the product of this conflation.

Comparative Millennialism in Africa: Continuities and Variations on the Canon

Lamin Sanneh

It is a truism of social history that the victims of economic and social deprivation, dislocation, isolation, fear and insecurity are prone to embrace millennialism and find in the message of the imminent end of the world the solution to their anxieties and the fulfilment of their dreams. The point is parodied in an ad piece carried by *Time* magazine (22 November 1999) depicting a white male, obviously short of his goals in life, dressed in yellow short-sleeves, blue jeans, wearing white velcro sneakers, and facing the sun as he plies a busy but otherwise oblivious New York city street. He is carrying a full-length sign attached to his body by a pair of shoulder straps, with the message in bold capital letters, 'The End is Near'. His hair is neatly brushed back, his eyes shut in concentration and his hands in earnest gesticulation as he at random announces his apocalyptic warning, to no particular audience in view. Obviously unrelated to him but striding purposefully alongside him is a black-suited, white-shirted, and red-tied African American male carrying a leather briefcase and talking on a cell phone.

The caption under the sign the herald is carrying says that the man would feel differently if he won a million dollars. In other words, he would in that happy scenario be carrying a briefcase and, a fulfilled individual, he would be talking on a cell phone on his way to the bank rather than going nowhere with a millennial sign tied round his neck. The whole thing is an advertisement for a cash draw sponsored by a major credit card company, and it is making ironic use of the idea of a million reckoned in real financial terms being more rewarding than one peddled on delusory religious grounds. The religious message is potent enough, however, to act as a trailer, so that, while before we would not recognize the credit card company by any particular image or symbol, we might identify it now with a powerful religious image. The goal, in any case, is to evoke the eschatological power of religion, or at any rate of

religion as a utilitarian commodity, as a strong enough incentive to make us fall in for the promised millions of a credit card company. Under the spell of professionals in the business of product recognition, perhaps readers will flock to the unknown God of material optimism as they reel in boredom from having to deal with the abandoned God of their forebears. Accordingly, millennialism is marketed as a commodity for individual fulfilment.

It proves that there is much about the appeal of millennialism even when it is far removed from times of deprivation, upheaval and unrest, to warrant apocalyptic signs bearing tidings of optimism for a jaded but still impressionable audience, and those in the promotional business take advantage of that for their own lucrative ends. Notwithstanding that, it can be argued that at its primitive core millennialism has been less about individual enterprise, less about product promotion, than a haunting reckoning with the past. In new circumstances, as we shall see, that will change, but in the meantime millennial fervour remains nearly indistinguishable from an awakened sense of collective obligation towards the past, so that righting the wrongs of the past requires an obligatory penance, and a moral warrant, for acquittal and a better life. By confronting the demons of the past through a process of self-scrutiny and personal purification, primitive millennial movements promise to banish the demons and to replace them with a righteous verisimilitude of their evil design. Millennialism mobilizes radical social impulses to serve conservative moral ends, so that the radical step of ringing in the new order becomes a precautionary mandate of coming to terms with the old fundamentals, precautionary because exoneration is conditional and future breaches can still occur. Whatever the case, millenarianism is a metaphor for defiant children who, imperilled from their wanderings in the wilderness, are called once more to walk in the imagined ways of their forebears to obtain salvation.

Part I: Muslim Africa: Millennialism and Marginality – Foundations

In considering examples of millennialism with the help of Muslim African materials, followed in Part II by related traditional and Christian African examples, we can identify two major categories for analysis. One is marginality – understood here as historical enclavement – a process that implants minority groups and communities in mainstream societies without weakening or threatening their identity or that of their hosts. The other is mobility or itinerancy of the *tournée pastorale* variety, and how mobile, itinerant groups and individuals turn into carriers of millennial expectancy.

The popular use of marginality to describe socially deprived and economically marginal groups is different from the approach of Victor Turner

and Arnold van Gennep who stress the positive role of marginal social groups and individuals.[1] Conceived symbolically, marginality is important as a preparation for millennial action. The act of setting oneself apart, or being set apart, with one's sights set on assuming power, belongs crucially with the marginal function. We should again stress that this positive conception of marginality is different from popular notions of marginal groups as oppressed or disadvantaged, more typically against their will or without much choice on their part. Such groups would be at the bottom of the heap, easy prey for exploitation. Such marginality is largely an imposed or unwilled condition, lacking the intentionality and drive of agents. No light of illumination wells up from such a condition, no keen insight or penetrating discovery concerning human character and identity flows from it, no lofty premise upholds it. This negative marginality, with its hints of force and compulsion, and of suppressed identity, is inferiority. It may serve the purpose and end of historical agents, but its power arises from external direction, not from inward conviction. As one example below illustrates, this category of marginality includes slaves.

There is, however, the second type of marginality, suggested by van Gennep and Turner, and it concerns people borne on the tide of mobility and arriving as outsiders or strangers in a new community. In Africa, for instance, stranger communities have played a pivotal role in religious and social change, and in the general demographic reshaping of towns. Such stranger communities fit into long-established local categories: the Hausa *zango*, the Fulani *sabongari*, the Tokulor/Fula *ardoën* and *jokriyendem*, the Manding *luntankunda*, or even the Wolof *gan*, including the *nawetan*, to take a few West African examples of what is essentially enclavement. Such newcomers are normally exempt from the rules and requirement of kin obligation and, in return, occupy a position of political neutrality, often symbolized by rituals of transition, for that is what they are, a transitory people caught in the flux of coming and going, a people between and betwixt.

In this group of marginals we find some of the most enterprising and dynamic individuals, people whose horizons have been broadened by time and exposure, by duration and experience, whose skins wear the deep hue of the 'tanning of travel'. They bring awareness of an enlarged macrocosm to their host community, infusing resident populations with fresh ideas and new options in the give of foreign expertise and the take of local hospitality. The stranger Muslims negotiate with the host community through community landlords, the *lamdos*, who hold court at fixed times in the social and economic calendar.

The *lamdo* is not an independent agent but a mediator and facilitator, conveying messages and running errands. His (sometimes her) job is to deflect face-to-face encounters between the two groups, to limit relations to the

circuitous third person, and to preserve spatial separation between the two groups. His task as *lamdo* will ensure ritual observance of spatial separation, thus lessening the risk of friction between strangers and residents. The *lamdo* is the linchpin of the network, holding together the different needs of boundary-free transient groups and boundary-hinged sedentary populations. His role establishes spatial separation as an aspect of social organization, in fact as an attribute of *territorial passage*.[2]

Shielded without being discriminated against, marginal groups or individuals are obviously not at the bottom of the heap in any meaningful sense. Instead their marginality is of the type acquired from being outsiders to the kin structure, to the political system, and sometimes even to centres of economic power. Their significance lies in their capacity to incubate power, to raise the temperature, as it were, by fomenting and guiding hopes and aspirations for a better and different future. They promise to reconstruct society, and to be able to signify the auspicious moment when the chosen few would effect the necessary change. The element of millennial anticipation that persists in many rituals of transition is in fact a proleptic device to exchange numerical inferiority for moral advantage and to anticipate a future moral rebirth. Enclavement is propitious soil in which to plant the seeds of change judiciously. Time and prayer do the rest.

There is, of course, a risk in marginality of this type. The stakes are high enough to warrant the risk of defiant seclusion, of trying to sell falafel in taco country, of trying, as it were, to force on local populations habits borrowed from foreign cultures. Local rulers may offer hospitality to attract or reward Muslim support, but may then sniff the scent of approaching challenge and decide on expulsion in a preventive action to forestall change. Or, marginality may tragically miscalculate the mood for change and bring reprisals on itself.

This theme of miscalculating the mood for change is alluded to in one well-known eighteenth-century instance where the Sarki, or king, of one West African pagan state, Gobir, said he woke up one day to find his Muslim guests had grown in number and confidence, had turned implacably militant and were threatening his kingdom. They were in no mood for conciliation and concession. He had been too sanguine, and rued the day, he said, when he gave friendly sanctuary to Muslims. He later complained to his fellow kings 'that he had neglected a small fire in his country until it had spread beyond his power to control. Having failed to extinguish it it had now burnt him. Let each beware,' he lamented, 'lest a like calamity befall his town also.'[3]

In numerous places in Africa, stranger Muslim communities perceived to represent unacceptable competition have been curbed and given Hobson's choice of taking leave. Their departure, whether actual or symbolic, has usually opened a liminal frontier, with the refugees spreading through new

territories and scattering reform ideas. Instances of such expulsion, however, are rare, for a Muslim enclave often brings new opportunities to neighbouring communities and is accordingly welcomed.

Islam in Africa: Millenarian Sources and Movements

One of the earliest references to millenarian ideas in West Africa is contained in the report of one of the greatest medieval Arab travellers, Ibn Battuta (1304–77). On a visit to the West African kingdom of Mali in 1353 he gives a rare eye-witness account of what appears to be a highly developed ritual for incubating millenarian expectancy in tropical Africa. The group involved is identified as a Shi'i settlement very much in the tradition of *hijrah* communities set up to keep the flame of expectancy alive, with the Shi'ite reference a recognition of millenarian thought being in origin a Shi'i doctrine, though it has subsequently been embraced by the wider Sunni tradition as well. In any case here is Ibn Battuta's account:

> The inhabitants of this city are all of them *imams* [Shi'i] of the Twelvers sect … Near the principal bazaar in this town there is a mosque, over the door of which a silk curtain is suspended. They call this the 'Sanctuary of the Master of the Age'. It is one of their customs that every evening a hundred of the townsmen come out, carrying arms and with drawn swords in their hands, and go to the governor of the city after the afternoon prayer; they receive from him a horse or a mule, saddled and bridled, and (with this they go in procession) beating drums and playing fifes and trumpets in front of this animal. Fifty of them march ahead of it and the same number behind it, while others walk to right and left, and so they come to the Sanctuary of the Master of the Age. Then they stand at the door and say 'In the name of God, O Master of the Age, in the name of God come forth! Corruption is abroad and tyranny is rife! This is the hour for thy advent, that by thee God may divide the true from the false.' They continue to call in this way, sounding the trumpets and drums and fifes, until the hour of the sunset prayer; for they assert that Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-'Askari entered this mosque and disappeared from sight in it, and that he will emerge from it since he is, in their view, the 'Expected Imam'.[4]

The doctrinal theme of Ibn Battuta's account acquires a particularly sharp ideological edge in the account of another North African Muslim whose pronouncement has come to assume the status of a manifesto of Muslim African *jihad* movements. In that passage the fifteenth-century North African scholar and firebrand, 'Abd al-Karim al-Maghili al-Tilimsani (d. 1506), who was visiting the West African Muslim state of Songhay, wrote in 1492 to the king, Askiya al-Hajj Muhammad Ture, to the effect that the Muslim world

in their day was on the verge of a critical threshold, and that men like themselves should hasten the onset of the new age. Al-Maghili put it in words that have reverberated in Muslim millenarian movements across the centuries:

> Thus it is related that at the beginning of every century God sends (people) a scholar who regenerates their religion for them. There is no doubt that the conduct of this scholar in every century in enjoining what is right and for-bidding what is wrong, and setting aright (the) people's affairs, establishing justice among them and supporting truth against falsehood and the oppressed against the oppressor, will be in contrast to the conduct of scholars of his age. For this reason he will be an odd man out among them on account of his being the only man of such pure conduct and on account of the small number of men like him. Then it will be plain and clear that he is one of the reformers (*al- muslihin*) and that who so opposes him and acts hostilely towards him so as to turn people away from him is but one of the miscreants, because of the saying of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace: 'Islam started as an odd man out (*gharib*) and thus will it end up, so God bless the odd men out.' Someone said, 'And who are they, O Messenger of God?' He said, 'Those who set matters aright in evil times.' That is one of the clearest signs of the people of the Reminder (*ahl al-dhikr*) through whom God regenerates for people their religion.[5]

It is clear that al-Maghili's own marginal, liminal position, his 'separation from native land, friends and familiar things', as Suhrawardi describes it, increased his receptivity to the text on reform, and he was thus set to draw Songhay tightly into that ideological net. Three elements combine in al-Maghili to thrust Muslims into the millenarian age: the prescriptive courage of a scholarly minority, the centennial hope induced by the religious calendar (a hundred-year rite of passage, if you will), and, with the backing of the Songhay state, a resolute will to recast the larger society in the image of the righteous few. These three elements conform nearly exactly to Turner's existential communitas, normative communitas and ideological communitas, and, what is more, they stamp duration with the programme of revolutionary social change.

The reform movements in Muslim Africa, stretching from the fifteenth to the early decades of the twentieth century, have spawned a tradition of moral enclavement where cumulative pressure matures and finally bursts out in historical movements. In such movements Muslims are led by those able and willing to repudiate prevailing customs and attitudes and to place the trust-worthy few at the head of affairs.

The *hijrah* community is the millenarian enclave par excellence. The

reformers undertake *hijrah* to indicate in a formal way their break with the status quo. During *hijrah* they observe with unusual intensity the obligatory rituals of purification, prayer, fasting and dietary regulations. They study the code and the manuals and follow with punctilious faithfulness the letter and spirit of the law. With fastidious care and detail, they water the seeds of rebellion, keeping mainstream structures and institutions in view and within range. So they come up for air by maintaining links with their world, attracting newcomers and sending out sympathizers to keep up the pressure. The *hijrah* community in principle transcends the restrictions and inequalities of life, allowing free and equal access to goods and services, inculcating a common ethical code among its members, and a shared feeling of privileged moral exclusiveness vis-à-vis the unjust and oppressive structures of the world. It is a form of religious globalization that compresses symbolic marginality into the truly representative ideal. It is, to cite Turner, 'the units of space and time in which behavior and symbolism are momentarily enfranchised from the norms and values that govern the public lives of incumbents of structural positions'.[6] What is conceived and nurtured in this special atmosphere has attached to it the seal of virtue, and will on that account claim priority over existing structures and institutions.

The heightened attention to ritual observance in the *hijrah* community, for example, helps to promote and elevate ordinary *salat* into an incubatory, millenarian rite. The washing or ablution that is done before the prayers becomes a ritual act of separation, of withdrawing from mundane routine and demands; the entry into the mosque for *salat* an act of transition; the prayer motions of the *salat* a symbol of participation and incorporation into the ranks of the elect. All of this would intensify the feeling of chosenness, of millenarian exceptionalism, and thus, if the conditions are right, open the way for impending judgment and action.

The recognized leaders of such *hijrah* communities have often used the *salat* observance to develop a particularly acute form of ritual withdrawal, called *salat al-istikharah*. It is ritual exclusion for a period of, say, forty days, during which time the cleric seeks guidance from God about the specific course of action he should, or should not take. All contact with the outside world is broken off, and at the conclusion of the forty days the cleric is rewarded with a mandate for action, normally in the form of a dream or vision. What comes out of *istikharah* is deemed safe from the contamination and corruption of this world, since it emerges from the womb of consecrated time and is thus immune to temporal compromise or defect. In the phrase of the masters, the *istikharah* vessel drips with what is in it.[7] *Istikharah*, thus, concentrates at one sensitive point the ritual, individual and social dimensions of revolutionary gestation. It produces the motive power for embarking on

change of a specific kind and at a specific time, and bringing to term the fully developed idea of change. In the conditions of ritual seclusion it prescribes the rubric for personal and social transformation. It uses the gaps between the structures to construct a fresh order that discredits the old and thus dramatizes prescriptive opposition to the status quo.

Salat al-istikharah has an abbreviated parallel in *khalwah*, another form of ritual seclusion and preparation undertaken for about a week or so by secular clerics. In spite of the generally recognized risks associated with it, *khalwah* is in frequent demand by ordinary Muslims. A cleric would typically undertake it for a fee at the request of a client with various desiderata: healing, safe travel, marriage, a job, advancement or a prophylactic. *Khalwah*, however, is a risky procedure, fraught with dangers for the over-eager cleric. It may bring ill-prepared clerics to spiritual grief by reducing them to mere gibberish, unable to give words to their thoughts. Yet *khalwah* does represent in society a recognition that symbolic retreat may be endowed with rare social power, and, even where it goes wrong, *khalwah* may appeal as a last resort against apathy and disenchantment. Those who resort to it demonstrate a dissatisfaction with things and conditions as they are, whether or not they succeed by, or from it. *Khalwah* is their hope of thrusting aside the inhibitions and constraints of the status quo and improving their station in life.

The North Nigerian Fulani reformer, 'Uthman dan Fodio ['Uthman ibn Fudi] (1754–1817), illustrates very well what effects *istikharah* and similar spiritual techniques might produce on the consecrated clerics who undertake them, and what that does in laying millenarian claim to space and duration. These special rites can have an exceptionally clarifying effect on what William James calls the will to believe and the resolve to bring change to pass. Dan Fodio described a vision that occurred to him in 1794. It is a vision wrought in ritual gravitas, crystallizing in the sublime proofs of a liminal charter for action. From it he received the orders to embark on revolution, an idea he had long cultivated independent of heavenly visitation, but now can carry out with the added weight of divine approval. In his meticulous account, he begins by stating his age precisely in years, months and even days, wishing us to see symbolic meaning in that threefold division of time.

> When I reached forty years, five months and some days, God drew me to him, and I found the Lord of djinns and men, our Lord Muhammad – may God bless him and give him peace. With him were the Companions, and the prophets, and the saints. Then they welcomed me, and sat me down in their midst. Then the Saviour of djinns and men, our Lord 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, brought a green robe embroidered with the words, 'There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God' – May God bless him and give him

peace – and a turban embroidered with the words, 'He is God, the One.' He handed them to the Messenger of God – may God bless him and give him peace – and the Messenger of God clasped them to his bosom for a time; then he handed them to Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, and he handed them to 'Umar al-Faruq, and he handed them to 'Uthman Dhu 'l-Nurain, and he handed them to 'Ali – may God ennoble his face – and then to Yusuf – upon whom be peace – and Yusuf gave them back to my Lord 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani; and they appointed him to act on their behalf, and said, 'Dress him and enturban him, and name him with a name that shall be attributed exclusively to him.' He sat me down, and clothed me and enturbaned me. Then he addressed me as 'Imam of the saints' and commanded me to do what is approved of and forbade me to do what is disapproved of; and he girded me with the Sword of Truth, to unsheath it against the enemies of God. Then they commanded me with what they commanded me; and at the same time gave me leave to make this litany that is written upon my ribs widely known, and promised me that whoever adhered to it, God would intercede for every one of his disciples.[8]

It was a point of no return. In the approaching apocalyptic time, he felt, the old enemy structures would be brought down, and to hasten it he adopted the path of militancy towards the compromising Muslims and the corrupt political leadership that had built its career on short-term cynical expediency. This deplorable situation had allowed fleet of foot political compromisers to stroll unchallenged around the commandments of God. Three years later, in 1797, we find the Shehu firmly set on that militant course and making preparations to arm his followers and set them up for *jihad*. He commanded that preparing for *jihad* as he directed them was a *sunnah*, a prescribed norm of the Prophet himself. During months of feverish activity, the Shehu used the prayer ritual to bolster the ardour of his disciples. His brother, 'Abdallah dan Fodio, records that the Shehu 'began to pray to God that He should show him the sovereignty of Islam in this country of the Sudan, and he set this to verse in his vernacular ode, *al-Qadiriyya* ["The Qadirite Ode"], and I put it into Arabic in verses'.[9]

The Shehu coupled this millenarian stance with a decision to emigrate from where he was living in Gobir to Gudu. It was a symbolic act of giving public birth to his movement as well as an act of political defiance: Gobir had been hostile to him and to his disciples, and repudiating it would taint it with the stigma of infidelity and enmity towards God. This is the *territorial passage*, primed with ritual force, that van Gennep described as crucial to the liminal breakthrough.[10] The Shehu insisted on the *territorial passage*, the *hijrah*, as a prerequisite of sound faith, especially where it entailed accepted personal deprivation:

O brethren, it is incumbent upon you to emigrate from the lands of unbelief to the lands of Islam that you may attain Paradise and be companions of your ancestor Abraham, and your Prophet Muhammad, on account of the Prophet's saying, 'Whoever flees with his religion from one land to another, be it [merely the distance of] the span of a hand, will attain to Paradise and be the companion of Abraham and His Prophet Muhammad.'[11]

The 'span of a hand' stands for the millenarian shift of perspective. In that perspective, the denunciation of worldly structures is very different from the ascetic call for world and carnal renunciation. The Shehu and his followers intended no flight from world conquest, no abatement of human passion, merely a tactical move to prepare the better for victory. Mystical discipline would remove the rust of corruption from truth, tone up the muscles for action, and assist the faithful in having their motives refined and polished to prescriptive ends. So to repeat: in the 1804 Muslim revolution in north Nigeria, mahdist ideas circulated widely, though it is uncertain if the leaders meant to suggest that the mahdi was one of them. The *hadith* of Abu Dawud (d. 888), that 'Surely God will raise up for this Community, at the beginning of every century, one who will reform their religion', was widely attributed to the supreme *mujahid*, the Shehu himself. Although he rejected any mahdist claims, the Shehu nevertheless claimed to be the portent, the mahdist precursor or forerunner. He told his followers the new *jihad* dispensation being established would last till the mahdi came. Such apocalyptic teaching galvanized the *jihad* movement and led to mass conversions as people waited for the millennium.[12]

However, millennialism reeks too much of the element of uncertainty and the unknown for it to be entirely amenable to a community that feels itself entitled to the orderly warrants of collective observance and obedience. Thus the Shehu's community faced serious disruption as the faithful prepared for mass exodus to meet the impending end. For example, the road from Adam-awa leading east was kept open to allow for mass passage to Mecca during this time. But the exodus threatened to become a ragged stampede, and forced the leaders to retract their advice to prevent people from leaving, apparently with little effect. The power to work miracles that was attributed to the Shehu and his companions easily deteriorated into apocalyptic confusion. Still, confusion aside, the Shehu's religious training and his teaching activity culminated in a mandate for change, in contrast to the former situation where he had choice forced on him.

The natural question at this point is whether revolutionary incubation as a stage of millennial organization can miss its moment, and what the consequences of that might be. In other words, can people at an advanced, stubborn stage of ritual and spatial seclusion and moral separation become

locked in a state of permanent millenarian isolation, becoming thereby a negative ghetto merely content, as it were, to allow the clock to run out? Is the anchorite enclave viable as a permanent millenarian state? We know that many groups made a virtue of permanent enclavement, only to stagnate, exchanging dynamic agency for static ideals. The historical record is littered with the desiccated remains of such utopian fossils but, under the right historical conditions, they are quite combustible.[13]

One example, drawn from African Islam, might suffice. In the nineteenth century there arose in Futa Jallon a mass popular movement, called the Hubbubé, whose members repudiated constituted authority and created in the countryside, outside the centres of power, a *hijrah* community called Boketo. They were led by Abal Juhe, the son and heir of the movement's charismatic founder, Mamadou Juhe, who charged that the inheritors of the utopian ideals of Karamokho Alfa, the Muslim reformer of 1727, had allowed standards to slip for the sake of personal gain. More specifically, the slave question had got out of hand when the Fulbe *mawubé*, the political elite, tried to squeeze increased revenue out of an already impoverished slave peasantry, and then resorted to plunder to increase the size of slave holdings.

The overburdened slave populations became increasingly restive, waiting for a leader to gather the embers of discontent into one burst of fire. They found this leader in Mamadou Juhe, a daring and cunning figure who knew well how to turn the scattered discontent of the countryside into more organized and coherent channels. He used Islam to articulate the grievances of his motley followers on whom he imposed his strong personality. The disenchanted, the overtaxed, the impoverished, the rootless and other flotsam and jetsam poured out from the nooks and crannies and crevices of society to hail the messianic dispensation, an avalanche that shook the countryside. One scholar described the miscellaneous social composition of the Hubbubé, caught up in the fervour of throwing off their chains, and scarcely by a vision of what to build: 'The Hubbu movement mobilized and attracted to the periphery of Futa Jallon the oppressed, the jungle Fulbe, that is, Fulbe of inferior status and extraction who were liable to taxation and to forced labor without mitigation, descendants of pastoral Fulbe recently converted to Islam, certain unassimilated Jallonke, and thousands of slaves concentrated in the *rima'ibe* ("slave camps").'[14]

Dr Edward Blyden (1832–1912), the most influential black intellectual of his day, visited Futa Jallon in 1872 and left an eye-witness account of what he found of the rump of the Hubbubé movement:

> The Hoobos are renegade Fulbe in revolt against the king of Timbo. Twenty years ago, on account of the exactions imposed by the Almamy Umaru, they

rose in revolt and with their families removed themselves to come and settle the grazing lands between Futa Jallon and Solima country. They are called Hoobos or Hubus because following their departure from their homes they were chanting in chorus a verse from the Coran in which the word Hubu appeared twice. It says this: 'Nihibu ("Nuhibbu") Rusul (Rasúl) Allah Huban ("Hubban") Wahidan', which means those who love the Envoy of God ('without compromise').[15]

Former slaves constituted a major component of the ranks of the Hubbubé, showing how the marginality of inferiority and economic deprivation can be exploited to boost the fortunes of prescriptive marginality and serve the end of real agents, as we noted above.

Boketo thus conformed to the classic features of *hijrah*, of revolutionary incubation. When Abal took over the leadership of the movement he intensified his father's reform programme. He abolished slavery in the movement and issued a call to all slaves elsewhere to repudiate the bonds of servitude and come to Boketo, the privileged enclave of egalitarian virtue. There the Hubbubé were infused with a heady dose of millennial chosenness, turning that intoxicating fervour against the country's discredited *maⱳubé*. They scoffed at conventional rules, flouted norms of established conduct and took to looting and general lawlessness. Virtue had turned wild and impetuous.

The Hubbubé became the scourge of the countryside, a ragged band of disoriented malcontents who disdained lawful enterprise and made bold to live from plunder and violent sequestration. However, cut off from other centres of renewal and without an agenda to launch a sequel, the Hubbubé became sitting targets, or else aimless refugees. Blyden describes their painful demise in these words:

> The Hooboos, those renegade Foulahs, who for thirty years have been a terror to caravans passing through the districts which they infested, have been scattered by the military energy of Samudu ('Samori'), Mandingo chieftain from the Konia country, due east of Liberia. Abal, the chief of the Hooboos, has been captured and banished to a distant region.[16]

In fact, Samori's forces dealt brutally with Abal Juhe, his *disjecta membra* being put on public display as a show of triumph. Nevertheless, the fate of the Hubbubé is by no means characteristic of what happens with millenarian movements with spent force. Many of them are spared the fire or the sickle and are left to lie dormant until their vital substance can be absorbed by their successors. Thus have certain key elements of traditional African rites survived and become incorporated into viable forms of local Muslim practice.

Part II: Prophet Movements and Millenarian Promptings in Traditional and Christian Africa

In this second part we should shift to a different aspect of millennialism, one that involves marked continuities as well as variations on the canon of millenarian expectation. We should pay attention to the close interaction with African religions and traditions, and to changes in the idea of millenarianism itself.

One class of rulers with world-wide ambition who, with peremptory suddenness, burst upon the African scene consisted of Europeans, and they had little regard for the religious traditions of the Africans they encountered. Yet for these Africans, threatened with marginalization in their own societies, the confrontation with Europeans demanded a religious, intellectual answer, an answer that was capable of making sense of the defeat of the tribes at the hands of the white foreigners. The shrines and sacred pots that contained sanctions for the old ways of life and custom were shattered from the advent of Europeans, and the pockets of resistance that survived by virtue of being sheltered in remote, scattered districts would provide little protection against the advancing line of fire. It all felt like the haunting confirmation of a curse preordained by the supernatural powers, a curse whose effects could be seen in rising intra-tribal vitriol and in the multiplicity of factions and divisions that followed in the wake of defeat. And so the thoroughness of defeat combined with its inevitability to throw the natives into bewilderment and panic. Instead of the rites of passage sanctioned by normative custom and usage, the people now performed rites of expiation and rituals of propitiation, and combined those with offerings of penance and restitution to fend off further calamity. People felt challenged to deal with the question of why the old gods failed them and what people should do to humour the gods so as to earn again their trust and protection. If all else failed, people could throw caution to the wind and gamble away the tribal heirloom in a final millenarian struggle with the forces of wretchedness.

The advent of whites in South Africa produced profound changes in the life-style and worldview of Africans. By putting pressure on grazing pasture and on livestock, the whites, better armed and better organized, provided the ingredients from which a fresh potent brew of millenarian expectancy could be fomented. And so, beginning in the late eighteenth century, a chain of events was created: whites, long settled in the Cape colony, introduced commercial farming; new crops were introduced, in particular maize, which was more abundant, though more soil-depleting, than the traditional sorghum; populations increased; isolated ethnic kraals were ruptured; chieftaincy wars flared up; migrations were precipitated; social boundaries were crossed;

resettlements multiplied; and withdrawal as a moral option proved impossible. As a consequence, the ecology, weather and wildlife were affected, leaving people to conclude from all of that the certainty of an impending apocalypse. A pervasive mood of foreboding began to fill the air.

It was a matter of time before things came to a head. The Africans' reaction to the penetration of white settlers in the Cape colony, to the population pressure on the land, to the grazing demands of white cattle farmers, and to the drama of military defeat was to look to the ancient oracles for a religious explanation. And so the Xhosa confided in their prophets and diviners and entreated them to intercede with the shades who prescribed sacrifice and atonement for witchcraft possession. It was the role of prophets and diviners to 'doctor' the people for war, to dispense prophylactics to inure the fighters against the enemies' weapons. But after disastrous battles in which the enemy triumphed, the medicine men were in retreat. In 1819, one of them, called Makanda, led a band of some 10,000 warriors in an attack on Grahamstown. The attack was repulsed, with heavy losses for the Africans. Makanda was apprehended and banished to Robben Island, eventually to lose his life when he drowned trying to escape. Then in the 1840s another witch doctor, Mlanjeni, roused himself and his people to avenge past humiliation and lost honour by confronting the whites one more time. He vaunted his powers of magic, emboldening his followers with the promise that he could make them invincible, render the whites impotent by filling their guns with water and chase them out of the country. All he required in turn was for his followers to sacrifice to the shades and don the powerful medicines he would give them. The defeat that followed in 1853 did nothing to weaken faith in traditional divination, in the mystical chain of cause and effect in spite of the heavy strain it came under from the bitter experience of danger, defeat, disaster and the other accumulated miseries.

In this atmosphere of millenarian turmoil rumours began to proliferate of the Crimean War in which the Russian forces were described as being black. These rumours were fed by accounts of dreams and visions. A senior royal diviner, Mhlakaza, was summoned to investigate one such dream by Nong-qause, daughter of Mhlakaza's brother, a dream with an apocalyptic message and with the stipulation that Mhlakaza himself undergo a form of abbreviated *istikharah* consisting of a purification ritual for three days, and the sacrifice of an ox on the fourth day. As a consequence, he also received a dramatic vision in which he

> saw a number of black people among whom he recognized his brother some years dead. He was told by these people that they had come from across the water; that they were the people – the Russians – who had been fighting against

the English with whom they would wage perpetual warfare; and they had now come to aid the Kafirs, but before anything could be done for them they were to put away witchcraft, and as they would have abundance of cattle at the coming [millennial] resurrection, those now in their possession were to be destroyed.[17]

Mhlakaza's vision offered a draconian prescription for the ills of the day. A new millenarian order was promised, but the people would first have to put away witchcraft and kill all their cattle. Only then would the people's misfortune give way to universal victory and abundance. However, in spite of its radical prescription, the vision was grounded in fidelity to the old fundamentals, personified for Mhlakaza in his deceased brother who now surfaced among the hosts poised to aid the tribe against its enemies. Tradition would be restored; the dead honoured; evil spirits defeated; the whites vanquished; the land rejuvenated; and order established. The traditional belief among Africans that witchcraft was the cause of death and all other misfortunes invested dreams and visions with an unimpeachable authority. Dreams, especially lucid ones, were commandments, and the silhouettes in them of recognizable details from living experience gave their import the haunting aura of truth and their message ominous force. Chiefs and diviners used them to great effect to instruct, discipline, judge, reward and punish.

Yet the scale of destruction prescribed by Mhlakaza's messianic vision suggested a magnitude of disaster more comprehensive than the spectre of white domination. But such was the potency of dreams and prophecies that the vexed genie they unbound could not be coaxed back into the bottle. It precipitated bitter conflicts among chiefs and among their counsellors, in families and between generations. Old mothers, given to contemplating the end, chided their sons for being slow to obey prophecy and urged them to act to vindicate honour. Accordingly, Sutu, a seventy-year-old woman, rebuked her reluctant son, 'It is all very well for you, Sandilli; you have your wives and children; but I am solitary; I am longing to see my husband, and you are keeping him from rising and me from being restored to all the freshness and vigour of a blooming maiden.'[18] The die was cast.

In October 1856, that is barely seven months since Nongqause's reported dream to the grizzled diviner, Mhlakaza, a particularly virulent *jihad* broke out, except that this one was directed at livestock. An order was issued that all the cattle must be killed within eight days, and that on the eighth day all the dead would rise, presumably to inaugurate a new reign of abundance and justice. But nothing happened on the appointed day, and so more killings were ordered to overcome outstanding disobedience and bring about the desired end. Between 150,000 and 200,000 cattle were killed, and still the

millennium tarried, only the countryside was plunged into mass starvation and social dislocation. As clouds of doom engulfed the land, young men, seeing for a token the darkness that makes us afraid, as the poet Swinburne put it, fled so their descendants might do no worse – or better – than submit and survive as farm and migrant labourers under white control.

Defeat is not only the child of historical defiance, is not only reserved for the worst of times, but it is also a convertible asset as a prelude to the best of times. Thus, in that millenarian milieu, defeat, instead of settling the issue, turned provocative. And so the cattle-killings of 1856 lived on in the collective memory of the people to haunt and torment and to demand more acts of obedience and penance. Accordingly, in the Bambatha Rebellion which broke out in Zululand and Natal, similar mass killings of livestock were ordered in 1905–06, with a repetition in the Transkei in 1921, where prophecies of the end of the world were elevated to fresh millenarian heights. People were ordered to destroy all pigs and white fowls and, looking to the friendly skies, to wait for redemption from American aeroplanes flown by African Americans.[19]

But the old canon of the efficacy of tradition and custom can only be recycled and retailed for so long, after which rival ideas and systems of practice begin to generate variations in the idiom and to exert their own peculiar influence. The process did not begin everywhere at once or, for that matter, to the same extent. Rather, in the logic of historical development, it ebbed and flowed with circumstances and according to the capacity of people to embrace change. Competing understandings of millenarian events began to develop, hinting at deeper changes in the idea of millennialism itself, and raising the question of whether millennialism would persist as judgment from the past, or whether it would shift from that doctrinaire view of inherited misery to a positive view of change and innovation as bearers of new hope and possibility.

In South Africa itself there was a whiff in the air, and traditional diviners whose business it was to 'doctor' the tribes for war, could sniff salt up their nostrils. The time was at hand when people would be called upon to expunge the old ideas on which they were threatening to choke and to experiment with new ideas that held some promise for the future. The mineral revolution of the diamond rush in Kimberley and gold in Johannesburg in the 1870s created fresh pressure on agriculture and land, and had a major impact on black migrant labour centred on the mining industry. These forces were compounded in 1897 with the introduction of rinderpest, the deadly murrain that decimated some 90 per cent of the cattle stock in the affected areas. When the poll tax was introduced in Natal it became the spark for the latent discontent, with migrant labourers acting as a lightning rod for the rebellion that broke out.

An important contemporary component in this charged atmosphere of

cultural upheaval was a widespread phenomenon that came to be called 'Zionism'. Zionism is the blending of charismatic Christian ideas and materials with their anticipations in African religions. So dreams, visions and prophecy in scripture blended smoothly with old stock from African religions, with the added appeal of the novel impact of the Bible in the home-grown vernacular idiom.

The vernacular translations, mounted on a solid foundation of grammars and dictionaries, became a treasure trove of long sought-after answers, and from that source Africans obtained confirmation of the value of dreams, visions, trances, prophecy, healing and cultural restoration. Among the Zulu this immense linguistic enterprise began in earnest in 1857, contemporary with the cattle killings, and continued well into the 1920s. The African oral tradition found evocative and assuring parallels in mother-tongue translations of the scriptures, as if Christianity had at long last fulfilled the role of cultural precursor it was designed to be. The book of Psalms and Proverbs, the chronicle of prophets, priests, princes and potentates, the narratives of battles, exile and restoration, of droughts, floods and famine, the ritual injunctions of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the travails of Elijah, Jeremiah and Job, the apocalypse of Daniel and John, the messianic message of the Gospels, the vast range of human conditions in all these materials, for example, resonated deeply with African ideas and aspirations. Thus, for the speakers of the language in question, African tones in the Bible would sound primordial; would sound original and authentic. Equipped thus with the transcribed resources of their culture, the tribes could envisage a favourable outcome for the omens that used to fill them with gloom. The Africans had used the habit of divination, of soothsaying, to promote a tradition of cultural exegesis which, under new challenges, they refined as a technique of millenarian scrutiny to deal with defeat and subjugation under the whites. As Tiyo Soga, a nineteenth-century Xhosa Christian leader put it: 'I can see plainly that unless the rising generation is trained to some of the useful arts [of the whites], nothing will raise our people and they will be the grooms, drivers of wagons, hewers of wood[20] or general servants.'[21] Now the same habit of divination would allow them to scrutinize the Bible for omens of reassurance, would offer an exegesis of continuity with the old idiom. Perhaps there were other things Europeans brought, or would bring, that might not be so bad after all, which would make Christianity a strategic precursor and a standard of judgment.[22] The religion could enter native society, and enter it confidently, where no other European cultural practice stood a chance of adoption or sympathy. A register of value would be set up to assess European conduct.

Faced, then, with the prospect of inevitable and permanent white presence, the African Zionists responded by earnestly exploring new opportunities, by

eagerly looking to the West for more of the same charismatic ideas that fitted so well with African needs. In these favourable circumstances accommodation, or even justified rebellion, need not mean laying the axe to one's roots. Besides, the vernacular Bible, out of range of the scholar's clinical exegetical scalpel, could be repossessed in all its dense, packed originality, including its tribal genius. It was by virtue of such new order accommodation and the stimulus of the vernacular scriptures that a fledgling African Zionism came into being from the inspiration of an American of mixed Scottish and Australian ancestry, one John Alexander Dowie (1847–1907) of Zion City near Chicago. In 1896 Dowie began publishing a monthly called *Leaves of Healing*. His brand of pentecostal religion was eventually spread among the Africans in South Africa through the agency of Edgar Mahon (1867–1936), a clairvoyant, charismatic white South African in the frontier tradition of the Boers, and a Baptist pentecostal preacher, Daniel Bryant, who became a personal assistant of Dowie, travelling to the United States in that capacity. Back in South Africa, Bryant joined Mahon and another pentecostalist, Pieter L. Le Roux, in taking Zionism to the Africans. The first Zion baptism for Africans took place at the Snake River at Wakkerstroom in May 1904.[23] A liminal barrier was breached.

The spread of black Zionism was spurred by the general climate of upheaval and unrest of the time. The Boer War had just ended, but, instead of the respite people hoped for, the end of the war was followed by a severe drought and the famine that came with it. For several months the whole country was reduced to living on American food handouts. Black migrant labourers were restive and about to be provoked into open revolt. The religious ban on alcohol and tobacco struck at the wage economy in which Africans were paid in tobacco. When threatened by their white employees, the Africans would not budge, declaring laconically, 'Used to be slaves of drink and tobacco. Glory to God.'

The Bambatha Rebellion fed on this rumbling black unrest and its millennial overtones, and although the official reaction of the rebellion being fomented by Christian Africans was exaggerated, for such Africans could be found on both sides of the rebellion, nevertheless pentecostalism and its missionary sponsors had stoked the embers of intrigue and restiveness that lay behind the rebellion. The black Zionists had first preached in the territory, called the 'New Republic', that the Boers had sequestered in 1884 from King Dinuzulu as the price for aiding him in his fight against his rival, Chief Zibhebhu. Wakkerstroom, soon to emerge as a special community in the style of a *hijrah* centre, was a district in that New Republic. It was against the background of such Zulu Zionist activity that the apocalyptic message was received that all pigs and white fowls were to be destroyed in anticipation of the arrival of American aeroplanes. Dowie's *Leaves of Healing*, spiked with

relevant material from the Zulu Bible, was used to corroborate the apocalyptic message.

The ambivalence of Christian Africans towards the Bambatha Rebellion, however, shows there were beginning to emerge competing understandings of millennialism. Accordingly, the officials distinguished between, on the one hand, a harmless spiritual Zionism that was content with dispensing rituals of hope and assurance, and, on the other, a subversive political 'Ethiopianism' that was bent on driving the whites into the sea.[24] The blame for Ethiopianism was put squarely at the door of educated Africans, and at that of the mission schools they attended. Yet it can also be argued that millennialism as an idea was itself undergoing a mutation, with the peaceful strain within it utilized to offer a hopeful account of experience, and a violent strain still preoccupied with diagnostic retribution to avenge past failure. From the standpoint of traditional African ideas, the pacific strain in millennialism was more important and of longer-term consequence than the political interpretation that fastened on driving the enemy into the sea.

The West African Dimension: Variations on the Canon

It happened that in parts of West Africa the long, bleak centuries of endemic warfare had induced a widespread process of decay advanced enough for people to contemplate accommodation as a strategic option. Africans had witnessed with weary watchfulness the inexorable advance of Europeans into their societies, and had concluded that the fault for it must lie with Africans themselves. The old chieftain structures had become too involved in slavery and the slave trade to be able to offer safety for their people. On the contrary, slavery and the slave trade turned into the curse that allowed Europeans to establish themselves in African societies. Consequently, the people felt they had little choice except to reject slavery and the trade that thrived from it and instead to search for a new foundation altogether, one that would uphold a new moral order. The old religions once made sanguinary sanctions a staple of their reputation. Not unexpectedly, in their last agonies the old gods, too, made self-imprecation, made the potent curse, the price for invoking them, with retribution a one and final solution. In a clinch, the old religions offered millennial promises that fed on, and in turn fed, insecurity, and so generated a chain of circularity that threatened to strangle the people they were supposed to deliver. In contrast, a new morality would offer victim populations an unprecedented second chance, and, instead of leaving people stranded in the old ethics, it would provide warrants to change or abandon them.

As the bewildered Africans scrutinized the omens within the tradition of cultural exegesis handed down to them, they would come to the conclusion

that the old gods were dying while the white man's way of worshipping God was spreading and would prevail one day because of the evils and disruption caused by the slave trade. Samuel Pearse, a local clergyman, reported in 1863 a conversation with an elderly woman of Badagry, Nigeria, who mused ruefully on the strange times people were passing through, times

> when the worship of idols being transmitted from one generation to another was in crisis. The horrors of the wars that ensued doomed many [people] to an untimely dissolution and sold them into slavery. In the state of slavery how is it possible they could do such justice to worship as did their forefathers, and yet the evils came that were never seen nor heard of were the orisas [deities] alive?[25]

Instead of the older and younger generations being pitted against each other in a sudden access of liminal exclusion, as happened with the elderly Sutu and her son Sandilli, under the new millennial soteriology both would join in the effort of renewal, and in the effort of salvaging what remained worthy in the old ways. The plea of the old Yoruba woman on behalf of the imperilled orisas of the tribe had reached the ears of the younger Samuel Pearse, and might inspire Pearse to try to hold on to what was worth salvaging from the old and bring that into harmony with his new-found clerical vocation.

In numerous parts of the continent, it was this hopeful reconciliation of the old and the new that the work of the new Christian charismatic leaders represented. It is work that took African millenarianism in a new direction, a millennialism still that rejected the status quo, undoubtedly, but otherwise was turned in directions of reassurance, trust, spiritual efficacy, and community affirmation. True, the old vigilance persisted, provoked as it was by the way Europeans bulldozed their way into much of the continent, but now it was a vigilance freed of the baggage of political genealogy and fired by a passion of the cause of the poor and the underdog. The tribal ways were being trampled upon by the insensitive whites, the Africans reasoned, with the guardians of tradition looking on helplessly, or else, which amounted to the same thing, colluding with the whites. An old woman diviner made bitter complaint that the road that the colonial administration was building went through her village and broke her sacred pot. The young African who heard her complaint was the one who manned the steamroller used in the construction, and he later became a charismatic leader prophesying a new millennium. Charismatic power that was bestowed on the weak and rejected was one way, then, to answer the challenge of tribal disarray and the pain of white humiliation.

In this connection, one charismatic movement with overt political overtones was that led by Garrick Sokari Braide. He was born in about 1882 in the village of Obonoma in Kalabar in the Niger Delta. Obonoma, the birthplace, too, of his mother, Abarigania, was a stronghold of traditional religious

worship, being a centre of pilgrimage to the titular deity, Ogu. Garrick Braide, however, grew up in Bakana where his father, Daketima Braide, had settled. Some accounts speak of the young Braide being initiated into the Ogu cult at Obonoma by his mother.

Braide's parents were too poor to send him to school. Consequently, he grew up somewhat on the margins of Christianity which was penetrating the area. However, Christianity would become familiar to him from the practice of open air meetings that were held in Bakana from about 1886 onwards. Such public meetings seem to have had a major impact on him, for we hear that in the 1890s he had become an inquirer and had joined the St Andrew's Sunday School in Bakana. While there he came under the instruction of Rev'd Moses Kemmer of Brass. All the instruction was in the Igbo language which Braide had to learn. It was a long apprenticeship, and he finally successfully completed his catechetical course and was baptized on 23 January 1910, aged twenty-eight. In 1912, at age thirty, he was confirmed by Bishop James Johnson, the eminent Yoruba clergyman.

Braide's mature years increased his sense of personal urgency about the role he would play in his newly adopted religion. Reports speak of his embarking on a regime of liminal withdrawal, including intense religious exercises at this time, for example, slipping into St Andrew's church on weekdays for quiet personal devotions. These devotions comprised prayers for forgiveness of sin and for the personal mediation of Jesus. He had a Bible and a prayer book with him during his devotions.

Braide soon became a prominent figure in the Niger Delta Pastorate Church, noted for his charismatic gifts of prayer, prophecy and healing, the gold standard of charismatic religion. He used these gifts to advance his claim to authority. Thus, on one occasion he is reputed to have caused a heavy storm as punishment for those who defied his orders to observe Sunday as a day of rest and prayer. On another occasion he successfully prayed for rain to spoil plans for a local dance that he deemed offensive to religion. His reputation for thaumaturgy was spreading widely, which makes it difficult to say whether Ogu was the more powerful motivator or Christianity.

As if to clear up that ambiguity, Braide launched a campaign against the symbols of African religion, demanding that devotees abandon their charms, confess their sins and make trust in God their supreme rule in life. Braide seems to have been driven by a need to deal with the reality of the old spirits, and would not rest till he had subdued them. Yet his method deepened the paradox of his looking to Christianity, or his version of it, to provide answers to questions in which the old spirits had at long last exhausted themselves.

If Braide succeeded in adapting Ogu's power to the new Christian teaching, it would be a different matter with the colonial administration. Braide had

been extremely effective in preaching against alcohol consumption. Drunk-
enness and alcoholism had wreaked havoc on the populations of the Delta
towns and villages. Some three million gallons of gin and rum were consumed
there every year, a level of consumption that produced steady income to fill
the coffers of the colonial administration with dues from the excise tax, but
also took a toll on the social fabric. Consequently, Braide's temperance drive
quickly brought him to the attention of the authorities. He was threatening
the excise revenue and that turned him into a major public threat. By 1916,
at the height of Braide's movement, the government was showing a massive
loss of revenue, to the tune of £576,000 in excise taxes.

Meanwhile, the French in the Ivory Coast had at about the same time been
closely watching the conduct of another charismatic figure, Prophet William
Wadé Harris, and that suggested to the British that they, too, should mount
a similar surveillance of Braide's activities. As a self-declared prophet, Braide
had become a lightning rod for local discontent, and, the British felt, he could
not be ignored. Besides, the events of the First World War had by then also
produced deep nervousness in official circles; Germany, the common enemy
of the French and the British, was entrenched in the nearby Cameroon colony.
Braide was arrested in March 1916 and tried for economic sabotage and false
teaching. He was found guilty and sent to prison. He died in November 1918,
some months after his release.

Braide's preaching boosted the membership rolls of the churches in the
Niger Delta, Protestant, Catholic and Independent. In 1909 when Braide
began preaching there were only 900 baptized Christians on the membership
rolls of all the churches. By 1918 that number had increased to some 11,700.
The increase for Catholics in the period between 1912 and 1917 was 500 per
cent, the growth due largely to Braide's work.

Such numerical effects could not be contained within the historic mission
churches, and so a large number of Braide's followers constituted themselves
as a separate body in 1916, taking the name Christ Army Church. The church
in effect became a rival to the Niger Delta Pastorate Church presided over by
Bishop James Johnson. In 1917 the Christ Army Church applied for affiliation
to the World Evangelical Alliance in London, a necessary insurance policy for
an indigenous movement without much educated leadership and caught in
the web of global forces.

Another general consequence of Braide's activity was his being adopted by
nationalist opinion as an agent and symbol of African deliverance. The *Lagos
Weekly Standard* espoused his cause in op-ed pieces and in other leader
articles. The *Standard* claimed that Braide was anointed by 'the God of the
Negro' as an instrument to achieve the liberation of Africa. Braide was
defended against the attacks of Bishop James Johnson and other leaders of

the Niger Delta Pastorate Church. The *Standard* applauded Braide's career as demonstrating that colonial and episcopal structures and hierarchies were out of step with Africa's true needs, and therefore Braide should be embraced by all genuine patriots. Braide, according to this opinion, had offered an African cultural alternative to the Western forms of Christianity, and had looked to people at the grass roots to lead in the effort. His accomplishment thus was instructive about Africa's case to be freed of white domination.

The period of Braide's activities was a generally auspicious one for millenarian expectancy. Several forces conspired to bring that about and to propel charismatic and pentecostal movements forward. One was the world-wide influenza epidemic of 1918, known as the Great Pandemic, during which a series of revivalist meetings were held across Yoruba country and beyond. The meetings were in part a response to the urgent need of seekers for healing, for the epidemic reached its height in the area in October 1918. Many of the central figures of the revival movement had also been disaffected members of missionary-led churches and were resolved to break out on their own. Then there was the global economic slump of the 1920s, culminating in the Wall Street crash and the Depression that followed. That caused great hardship among the people, leading the government to adopt measures deemed highly unpopular. Almost contemporary with that, the city of Lagos was ravaged by bubonic plague between 1924 and 1926, increasing the appeal of applied religion and setting the stage for the new religious leaders to offer charismatic solutions: prayer, dreams, visions, healing and a sense of community. To increase the sense of disaster, there was a severe famine in 1932.

The revival meetings were carefully coordinated, with individuals travelling between meeting points and maintaining a resource network of personal contact and intercessory mediation. The formative period was from 1918 to 1930 when 'many implicit views of Christianity by leading Christians turned into something explicit'.[26] At the centre was a millennial-type figure, Joseph Babalola. In July 1930, at a vast public meeting at the Yoruba town of Ilesha, Babalola,

> clad in white shorts and shirt, with Bible and handbell, preached to the people to renounce evil practices and witchcraft, and to bring out for burning all their idols and juju, for God was powerful enough to answer all their needs, and to cure them. Furthermore, what became a standard practice, he sanctified the near-by stream by prayer, as *omi iye*, the water of life, as had been revealed to him. A District Officer who attended a meeting noted its purely religious and inoffensive character; it was not dramatic or exciting, and was most impressive when people raised the water-vessels on their heads for Babalola to bless them. He took no money and the crowds were orderly; the worst confusion was on the roads leading to Ilesha from Ife and Ijebu.[27]

Babalola was born in Ilorin Province, now Kwara State in Nigeria, in 1904. He had a few years of primary school education, quitting at a mature age in 1928. He was subsequently employed as a steamroller driver with the colonial Public Works Department. While engaged in this work he claimed to have heard a voice calling him to devote himself to preaching the gospel. Like his counterparts in scripture, such as Amos and Isaiah, Babalola was given a parable of his mission. In that parable he saw three palm leaves attached to his steamroller: one was dead and dry, the other was wilting, and the third was fresh and green with life, which represented those who responded favourably to his message. He was commanded to take a bell as the symbol of his commissioning and was given the promise that prayer and the *omi iye* would cure all manner of illness.

When Babalola burst upon the unsuspecting townspeople they were startled by his wild, dramatic appearance: he was naked and covered in ashes, carrying a bell and, in the manner of John the Baptist, calling upon people to repent. Finally, after predictable opposition in several places, Babalola arrived at the town of Ebute Metta near Lagos where he was baptized in December 1929 by a fellow charismatic preacher.

Babalola's reputation rested on his ability to deliver powerful prayers. For example, when he was at Ilesha he prayed in the name of *Oluwa Olorun Alayé*, 'Lord God of Life', and when news of this reached the town of Efon, it is reported to have impressed the chief, the Alayé of Efon, because of the apparent pun on his own title. So when Babalola subsequently arrived at Efon, a rousing hero's welcome awaited him.

The Ilesha revival that inaugurated Babalola's millennial career was followed by a stirring outpouring of the spirit in Ibadan at the hands of a man who had attended the Ilesha meeting and was on his way back to Lagos. Then a string of other places joined the revival movement: Abeokuta, Ijesha, Ekiti, Ondo and, most impressive of all, Efon where Babalola, the prince of prayer, strategically established a centre. His movement became known as the *Aladura*, a Yoruba term meaning 'prayer'. It is derived from the Arabic, *al-du'a*, supplicatory prayer, to be distinguished from *salat*, canonical prayer. Before long charismatic envoys, prophets and prophetesses were touring the country, preaching, prophesying, organizing, healing and confirming, reaching places as far apart as Onitsha and Port Harcourt in the Delta region, and Kano and Sokoto in the Muslim north, over a thousand miles apart by road. Sitting loosely to denominational boundaries, the revival leaders actually helped the mission-led churches to increase in membership and to experience a quickening of religious interest.

Nevertheless, from a convergence of circumstances, both external and internal, the religious ferment that burst to the surface with the revival

movement and spawned bubbly, spontaneous groups, sought more organized channels, and charismatic churches were established as a consequence. These churches combined the element of administrative independence from the mission-founded churches with that of internal liturgical adaptation, and stressed the importance of prayer, prophecy, healing and the habit of regular worship. Numerous splits occurred among them, within their ranks, and along many different lines: social and educational, generational and political. Yet, surprisingly enough, divisions seldom followed ethnic or tribal lines, suggesting the splits had more a religious character than the familiar tribal one.

These revival movements generated the churches that constituted what has come to be known as the African Independent Churches, sometimes also African Initiated Churches, with the revival phenomenon itself characterized as Independency – such names, important for other reasons, are in this instance only a matter of academic convenience rather than of categorical precision. These churches ran the entire gamut of theological persuasion, from ecstatic, frenzied congregations to tame, rule-based groups, from those who looked to dreams and visions, and hence to prophetic utterances, to those who fell back on the Bible, and hence on preaching and teaching the word. Yet all of them upheld the importance of healing of body and mind as well as of person and estate.

Some of the movements spread across national and international boundaries, with branches in such places as London, Glasgow, Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Newark and Philadelphia. They adopted a variety of names: Faith Tabernacle, Cherubim and Seraphim Church, the Church of the Lord (*Aladura*), Savior Apostolic Church – which became Christ Apostolic Church – and a variation (or a deviation, depending on your point of view), Christ Gospel Apostolic Church, the Precious Stone Church, the Praying Band, and, as we saw in the Niger Delta, Braide's Christ Army Church,[28] and so on. Here the names were more than a matter of academic convenience, for African tradition holds them to be refractions of the moral attributes they stand for. Accordingly, they were adopted or contested with millenarian fervour.[29] One such movement staked its whole charismatic reputation on the gift of heavenly names, a gift that could be bestowed on the members of the church. Thus the founder and his successor claimed that they were given 90,000 heavenly names, no two of which were alike.[30]

In its delayed passage from the camp meetings of the Southern slave plantations to Africa, in the journey from spiritual exile to symbolic restoration, revival religion lost nothing of its atavistic fervour, and had in fact retained a remarkable continuity with its millenarian roots in black religion as well as in the agitation for liberation and freedom. For example, writing in 1876, a critic of the black camp style religion in America attacked it for its

evocative African links, asserting that 'An African's religion finds vent at his heels. Songs and dances form no inconsiderable part of the worship of a Southern coloured camp-meeting. If we were constructing a ritual for the race we should certainly include this Shaker element,' he concluded.[31] Charles Chauncy, a pillar of respectable society, was an uncompromising critic of the eighteenth-century Great Awakening in New England in which he said the preachers made much noise but little connection. Chauncy went further and struck at the fountainhead of black revival religion by excoriating the Awakening for attracting the inferior sorts of people and giving them preposterous notions that they had a role in religion. Such people, he continued, flocked to these revival meeting houses by night, 'chiefly indeed young Persons, sometimes *Lads*, or rather Boys; Nay, *Women* and *Girls*, *yea Negroes*, have taken upon them to do the Business of Preachers'.[32] The typical scene at a revival meeting house, according to Chauncy, is one that assumes the character of madness. Shrieks, shouts and screams predominate. Visions and trances become common by contagion; worshippers by their own admission are transported to heaven where they see and hear glorious things; they converse with Christ and the holy angels; and they read in the Book of Life the names of the elect. The new converts cultivate with charismatic enthusiasm loud, hearty laughing as proof of regeneration.

Chauncy was unimpressed. A pity, since he was witnessing a historical watershed, a millennial event of the first mass movement of Christianity among the blacks, in contrast to the previous arid century or so when such an event would have been inconceivable. In another half a century the pattern would be repeated in Africa by these same blacks or their protégés, and would persist with incredible tenacity into the wider *Aladura* movement. One of the early movements in that *Aladura* revival was the Precious Stone or Diamond Society. It was founded in 1918 following a dream by Joseph Shadare, at that time a member of St Saviour's Anglican Church in Ijebu-Ode. Shadare was a goldsmith, but in his dream he was roused to deal in subjects more precious than gold. Part of his inspiration came from an American Pentecostal group, the Faith Tabernacle, whose literature had been passed to him. While little of the character of revival religion was lost in the trans-Atlantic crossing, Precious Stone responded more immediately to its African surroundings, with the emphasis on healing by prayer only. Not unexpectedly, in 1921 it broke away from the Anglican Church, a separation that in turn fed the appetite for further secession within its own ranks.

In hindsight, the conjunction of charismatic Christianity and the apocalyptic stream in African traditions resulted in a new phenomenon, or, rather, in the creation of a fresh tributary of millenarianism. The old hallowed wall supporting custom and usage was breached, as Samuel Pearse was made to

realize. A new direction was now indicated for the tribes, one that would not avoid having to deal with whites. But it was a direction that might also rescue the heritage in its wholesome parts and avert future disaster. It was a new social metaphysic, a well-tempered, hard-won ideal to which some of the new millenarian groups tried in their own limited way to give expression to.[33]

One such is the Musama Disco Christo Church, formerly called Army of the Cross of Christ Church founded in Ghana by a charismatic healer/ prophet, Joseph William Egyanka Appiah, a one-time Methodist catechist. He subsequently took the unpedestrian name of Prophet Jemisimiham Jehu-Appiah. The movement began in 1919 as a Faith Society until 1922 when it adopted its present name.[34] The church became institutionalized as something of a religious dynasty, with the founder's children placed in the line of divine right of succession. The twenty-four-part articles of confession combine doctrinal injunctions with directives on social and political practice. Accordingly the members of the church, offered in article 18 the dispensation of polygamy as scripturally approved, are told in article 8 to embrace ecumenical solidarity with the other churches and in article 19 to be good and useful citizens. Astonishingly enough, there is not a single reference in the creed to whites as enemies or to Western missionaries as adversaries. It is a striking example of the millenarian temper taking a turn away from reaction and protest and towards adaptation and internal renewal. And so in article 6 the normally potent creed of Christ's second coming is muted by other requirements that put the searchlight on personal life and conduct. The refinements to the creed that followed moved further away from millenarian apocalypticism.

Still, we must be careful not to read a universal rule in this, but merely to observe that the strand of millennialism that developed under the aegis of the new religious movements carried with it a sense of present danger being overcome by timely adaptation rather than by a neurotic resort to retribution, whether against self or others. In that sense millennialism has its own history, the history of an idea that eventually splintered into the moderate soteriology of Zionism in South Africa and *Aladura* in West Africa.

Conclusion

African millennialism has roots in both the Christian and Muslim traditions. The Middle Eastern character of Christianity and Islam has also penetrated the intellectual and cultural aspects of African millennialism. Mecca and Medina, Bethlehem and Jerusalem, have appropriate resonances with Muslim and Christian African sites. Similarly, the Muslim *hijrah* and the Christian Pentecost have inspired and shaped the charismatic message of mahdist and

Pentecostal movements in Africa. Furthermore, the European encounter has had a parallel enduring impact on the evolution of the millennial tradition in Africa, with Zionism and *Aladura*, for example, representing a highly eclectic expression of that fact. Zionism and *Aladura* also represent changes in the structure of millennial thought, in the canon of millenarian expectancy, changes I have characterized as the shift from a troubled view of the past requiring blood sanctions, with those sanctions subverting trust in the future, to a moderate soteriology, with its offer of hope, of a second chance, and the power to foster community.

Is There a Chinese Millenarian Tradition? An Analysis of Recent Western Studies of the Taiping Rebellion

David Ownby

Does China possess a native millenarian tradition? The best known examples of millenarian ferment over the course of China's long history – the many rebellions led by the folk Buddhist White Lotus sect from the fourteenth century onwards, and the massive, Christian-inspired Taiping Rebellion of the mid-nineteenth century – are remarkable, at first glance, for their foreign origin.[1] China's historically dominant ideology, Confucianism, is often depicted as 'this-wordly', 'secular', 'rational', 'humanistic', more concerned with social harmony than eschatology. The indigenous scriptures or movements which do seem to have been driven by soteriological or eschatological considerations – such as the second-century Yellow Turban Rebellion – are often treated as anomalous exceptions or are simply not given great weight in broader synthetic interpretations of China's histories of religion and rebellion.[2]

I would argue none the less that China does possess a native millenarian tradition, or, more accurately, native millenarian *traditions*. These traditions are most spectacularly evident in the rich history of popular rebellions in China, when millenarian images served as mobilizational tools promising a better world to those who would dare rise up against the uncaring imperial regime. Unfortunately, the history of popular rebellion, in China as elsewhere, is in reality the history of *the suppression of popular rebellion*, and our sources rarely speak to the concerns of this volume except by implication. Recent research on the history of popular religion, however, has done much to open windows on to the worlds of the Chinese apocalypse, although it remains frustratingly difficult to connect texts and movements. Work on the early history of Daoism, for example, has demonstrated not only that there was a Daoist millenarian voice, both at the elite and the popular levels, but also that Daoism and Confucianism shared certain utopian visions of the achievement

of paradise on earth.[3] Moreover, Daoist eschatology framed the earliest Chinese reception of Indian Buddhism, one effect of which was to produce, in China, a Buddhist millenarianism based on Maitreya (the future Buddha) which had never existed as such in India.[4] Much of the 'foreign' character of the later White Lotus sect dissolves when we realize that what the Maitreya believers longed for was a largely Chinese creation (who, in any case, had been present in China for centuries by the late imperial period when the White Lotus sect was widespread). Furthermore, recent research on the Triads, the famous secret societies generally understood as early incarnations of ethnic Chinese nationalism, traces their origins to a 'demonological messianic paradigm' which Triad founders adopted from oral apocalyptic traditions.[5]

In short, Chinese millenarian traditions did exist, and almost certainly exercised a more profound influence on Chinese history than we have heretofore recognized. However, the movements and writings which make up these traditions are widely dispersed over several hundred years of Chinese history, the scholarship treating these movements and scriptures is monographic and technical, and it is difficult to craft the sort of synthetic essay which would be of use to the readers of this volume, few of whom, one imagines, will be specialists in Chinese history. Hence I have chosen another strategy: an analysis of recent Western historiography of the Taiping Rebellion. This topic seems particularly apropos, for while the catalyst for the movement appears to have been the apocalyptic, fundamentalist Protestant Christianity of the Great Awakening, brought to South China by American and European missionaries, recent Western scholarly interpretations of the Taipings have uniformly highlighted the role of native Chinese religious culture in making the Christian vision comprehensible to a Chinese audience and converting the vision to a mobilizational tool. In sum, where earlier scholarship took the Taiping Rebellion as an example of the power of Western ideas to 'shake up' a moribund China, or as an example of the explosive power of cross-cultural misunderstanding, most recent work sees the Taiping Rebellion as proof of the power of China's own millenarian traditions to put Western images to their own use.

The Taiping Rebellion: A Brief History[6]

The central character in the Taiping Rebellion was Hong Xiuquan, a would-be Confucian scholar who had a vision in 1837, at the age of twenty-three, convincing him that he was Jesus Christ's younger brother, the second son of the Christian God. On the basis of this vision he later went on to found a religious movement – the God Worshipping Society in 1844, and the Kingdom of Everlasting Peace (*taiping tianguo*) in 1851 – and to lead a massive and

protracted rebellion against the reigning Chinese dynasty, which Hong condemned both as demons and as foreigners.[7] Against all odds, the Taipings succeeded in establishing a separate regime, which ruled much of South China as an aspiring utopian community from China's southern capital of Nanjing for eleven years, from 1853 to 1864. The scale of the rebellion is suggested by its human cost: as many as 20 million people lost their lives in the civil wars accompanying the rise and fall of the Taipings.

The core event of the Taiping Rebellion is Hong Xiuquan's vision, in which he rose to heaven, met God, his father, and Jesus Christ, his older brother, and received from them the apocalyptic mandate to rid the world of demons and re-establish the reign of the one true God on earth. All aspects of the Taiping movement and rebellion bear the deep imprint of the sacred vision and the subsequent effort to interpret it. Still, even indivdual visions, however singular and idiosyncratic, occur within one or several contexts, and to understand the vision and its ramifications we must ask: Who was Hong Xiuquan? How did he come to have what certainly appears to be a thoroughly Christian vision? How did this ostensibly alien vision come to occupy a central place in a revolutionary nationalistic millenarian movement in China?

Nothing of what we know of Hong Xiuquan's childhood suggests that he was destined for the notoriety he achieved. He was born in 1814, the fourth of five children to a farmer father in a village some fifty kilometres from the important southern city of Guangzhou (Canton). His sole remarkable feature at birth was the fact that he, his family, and indeed his entire village were Hakka, a sub-ethnic designation meaning 'guest people' and serving sociologically to distinguish the Hakka from the 'native' Chinese population surrounding them. The Hakka, numerous in certain parts of South and Southeast China, were acknowledged to be fully Chinese, but spoke a different dialect and had somewhat different customs than did 'natives'. These differences were attributed to different rhythms of migration which had ensured, according to Hakka mythology, the preservation of their 'purer' Northern dialect.

In some parts of China the Hakkas bore the brunt of discrimination, but in Hong's prosperous suburban village, whatever differences existed seem to have been muted. Indeed, Hong himself, as the most intelligent son of his family, pursued the pan-Chinese dream of scholarship and government service; there were special categories in certain Guangdong counties for Hakka examination candidates, affirmative action set-asides designed to help preserve the social peace. Hong passed the qualifying exams at a young age and took the lowest-level degree-granting examinations in 1827, 1836, 1837 and 1843 – failing on each occasion. There was nothing unusual about his failure; the pass rate, even at the lowest level, was between 1 and 2 per cent.[8] In 1836,

on one of his repeated trips to the provincial capital, Hong was given a Christian pamphlet entitled, 'Good Words to Admonish the Age'. The tract had been written by Liang Afa, a Chinese Christian convert who had worked and studied with a number of Western missionaries, one being Edwin Stevens, an American Baptist who was preaching on the street-corner when Hong received Liang's work.

The missionaries whom Hong encountered, both in 1836 and later, were quite different from the urbane, elitist Jesuits who had first begun mission work in China in the sixteenth century. While the Jesuits in some sense were at the forefront of the earliest Western penetration into China, missionaries in nineteenth-century China rode the coattails of a more powerful and expansive West, one determined to open China to commerce. Indeed, Hong Xiuquan's youth largely coincided with the period of tensions which led, in the late 1830s, to the Opium War, and these tensions were centred in Guangzhou, the sole Chinese port legally open to trade with Western merchants. Opium captains rubbed shoulders with Bible-thumping revivalist preachers in the tiny foreign community resident in Canton, and not all missionaries succeeded in distancing themselves from the morally and legally dubious activities of their fellow countrymen. Second, although the Jesuits returned to China later in the nineteenth century, most foreign missionaries in China in the early and mid-nineteenth century were revivalist Protestants – once again a far cry from the classically trained, organization-minded Jesuits whose message of salvation was directed at the head rather than the heart. The fundamentalist missionaries of the nineteenth century were convinced that the end was at hand and that extreme measures were required to effect the salvation of as many Chinese as possible before Jesus's return.

It is difficult to know how much of this context impressed itself on Hong or in what way. He must have been aware of the conflict with Britain, and of local acts of Chinese patriotism, yet when his vision took on nationalistic form it was the Manchus rather than the more exotic Westerners who became his target. As for the missionary message, the content of his vision seems to suggest that Hong must either have heard Stevens preach, or have glanced through Liang Afa's tract, or both. For in 1837, the year following his encounter with the missionaries, Hong sat the prefectural exams again, and once again failed. Learning of his failure, he suffered what the secular world would call a breakdown: he poured out his feelings of worthlessness to his parents and then took to his bed in a state of delirium often associated with religious visions. In his vision, he mounted to the heavens where his heavenly mother replaced his internal organs in a gesture of purification. He then was led to his father, an elderly man with a golden beard flowing down to his belt, wearing a black dragon robe who gave Hong seals (symbols of imperial

legitimacy) and a sword (an exorcistic instrument) and instructed him to 'slay the demons' in the world below (demons had also invaded the heavens, but their destruction was not Hong's responsibility). He did so, in adventurous forays which recall the more swashbuckling episodes of some of China's vernacular novels. He was accompanied in his battles by an older man whom Hong took to be his elder brother.

Hong's family had been sure that Hong was on his deathbed, and must have been delighted when he emerged from his experience physically renewed – if psychologically transformed. In place of the crippling frustration apparently occasioned by failing the examinations, Hong now exuded confidence and a somewhat overbearing self-assurance, empowered by the sense of mission conferred on him by his vision, even if the meaning of the dream and the objective of his mission remained unclear. He continued to teach school in the village, and even sat the examinations once more in Canton in 1843, failing yet again.

It was on returning home after this last failure, and apparently completely by chance, that Hong picked up Liang Afa's tract, which had been gathering dust on his bookshelf for seven years. It is not hard to imagine the electrifying effect this must have had, for here were the characters of Hong's vision, in all their glory: the venerable old man, Hong's father, was Jehovah; the middle-aged man who accompanied Hong on his demon-slaying missions was Jesus Christ. And Hong himself, obviously, was God's second son, the younger brother of Jesus Christ, sent to save the world from idolatrous worship of any God but the Christian Jehovah. Liang's message echoed time and again the basic fundamentalist message of revivalist Protestantism: the yawning chasm between the saved and the damned, the need to make manifest the power of the Lord in a world dominated by the devil (i.e., demons), the promise of salvation to those who believed. If Hong's vision had made him eccentric from 1837 onwards, his reading of Liang's tract transformed him into a single-minded zealot, who preached to family and neighbours the evils of alcohol, prostitution and, above all, idol-worship (which, in the Chinese context, meant virtually all forms of popular religious worship). If many of his former acquaintances surely tried to avoid him, one should note that his charisma and passion helped him to achieve more than a few conversions.

Still, zealotry did not lead immediately or even quickly to rebellion. Indeed, the local notables attempted to reason with Hong for several months before informing him, in the spring of 1844, that his services as village schoolteacher would no longer be required, and this despite Hong's incessant preaching and even his removal of the Confucian tablets (yet another form of 'idolatry') from the village school. At a loose end, Hong decided to take his message on the road, and departed for the West with his cousin and convert, Feng Yunshan.

To the west lay the Hakka communities of eastern Guangxi province, where Hong's message found a large and receptive audience. Eastern Guangxi, hilly, isolated and poor, is to the prosperous Guangzhou delta area what northern Mexico is to the glittering cities of Texas. The region had long been poor, ethnically divided, and distant from both central and provincial governments – a sort of inner frontier. 'River pirates', previously employed in opium smuggling in the Canton region, had lost their livelihood with the end of the Canton system and the opening of additional ports after the Opium War, and moved upriver to prey on the region. Much of local society came to be organized in armed groups, controlled by secret societies or local strongmen. The Hakkas, recent arrivals in the region, often found themselves odd-man-out in the local struggle for existence, a struggle often depicted in ethnic rather than class terms.

Hong's message offered the Guangxi Hakkas an explanation of their suffering, as well as long-term and short-term solutions. Suffering was the work of demons, defined at this point as the gods of Chinese popular religion. The short-term solution was a new communal organization, the God Worshipping Society; the long-term solution was eternal salvation. Hong and his followers took it upon themselves to destroy not only the idols which the Hakkas had previously worshipped, but those worshipped by certain other, non-Hakka groups. Such attacks, which took the form of battles reminiscent of Hong's vision, got Hong and his god noticed and earned them a certain amount of notoriety. Local gods in China are in some ways like professional boxers in America, expected to take on all contenders and only as good as their last fight.

Between 1844 and 1849, Hong's vision became a mass movement. Strangely enough, Hong himself had little to do with this development. After a few months of proselytizing in 1844, he returned home to Guangdong; Feng Yunshan was the chief organizing force behind the God Worshipping Society until his arrest and temporary deportation from the province in 1848. In Feng's absence, local leadership emerged and the movement, according to some scholars, changed its character in important ways. Hong's vision had been a one-time thing, a blinding revelation not unlike Paul's on the road to Damascus. Feng had taught Christian doctrine based on Hong's vision and Liang Afa's tract. By contrast, the new leadership – Yang Xiuqing was the most important of several – went into trances and had their own visions, or otherwise communicated directly with God. Indeed, by all accounts, the God Worshippers as a whole made trance and spirit possession a central part of their worship in a way it had not been before, large numbers of the congregation falling into fits of ecstasy on numerous occasions. If such practices recall those of fundamentalist revivals in the West, they are also well-known in China. Chinese popular religion teems with spirits capable of possessing

human souls. Later in the century, the Boxers, a xenophobic, anti-Christian group, used mass spirit possession to promise invulnerability to foreign weapons.[9] Hong had no choice but to acknowledge the spiritual power of the Guangxi leaders when he returned in 1849 (although all leaders decided to put an end to mass spirit possession from that point forwards).

The mass movement began to take on a rebellious orientation during this period as well, although this important transition is difficult to track with precision. The God Worshippers, because of the violent environment which spawned them, had always been half church, half local militia. As the organization grew, it was natural that it would threaten other local power-holders and, eventually, the Qing state. Moreover, the language of power in traditional China did not divide neatly into secular and religious spheres. The emperor claimed the 'mandate of heaven' and sought to regulate local cults. Hong had been to heaven himself, and referred to himself in the course of that vision as the emperor of China.[10] As early as 1847, he began to employ *zhen*, a first-person pronoun referring exclusively to the emperor, in his writings.[11] The local Guangxi leadership, who would eventually serve as general-kings in Hong's army, appears to have grasped the fact that the God Worshippers' church was taking on the proportions of an army, and to have encouraged Hong to act on what were coming to be collective fantasies. In July 1850, all God Worshippers from southeastern Guangxi were urged to sell their possessions, abandon their homes, and join the cause permanently. Hong summoned his family from Guangdong, as well, claiming that God had told him that he would send down calamities in 1850. The 20,000-strong believers were organized in military fashion and a clash with the state was all but inevitable.

After a number of minor victories, Hong proclaimed the founding of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace in January 1851. As the conflict unfolded, followers were told that the war was the fourth manifestation of God's rage and his power (the first was the biblical flood, the second the salvation of the Israelites exiled in Egypt, and the third the birth of Jesus Christ on earth) and that God and Jesus would assist Hong regularly, 'manifesting their innumerable powers' and 'exterminating great numbers of the demons in pitched battles'.[12] From this point onwards, the definition of 'demons' expanded to include the barbarous, non-Chinese Manchus, as well as the nefarious gods of Chinese popular religions, and the chief means employed to bring about the realization of the Heavenly Kingdom were military. Indeed, following a spectacular series of victories (punctuated none the less with numerous defeats), the Taipings established their 'heavenly capital' in Nanjing in March 1853. Although logistical and military concerns were foremost in the minds of Taiping leaders during this and later periods (civil war continued for more than a decade, until the Taipings' ultimate defeat in 1864), and religious commandments were

often employed to impose the strict discipline required by any army, the movement did not shed its religious or apocalyptic character as it transformed itself into a theocracy. Officers and foot soldiers were encouraged with poems which sounded millenarian themes, and the thousands of pages of documentation produced by the Taipings during this period continued to narrate the basic message of Hong's vision, complete with Jehovah and demons. Those who refused to join the Taiping troops were on occasion branded as demons and killed, while the Taiping dead were said to have ascended to heaven. Secret societies joined the movement, believing Hong to be an indigenous Chinese messiah, sent to fight 'demons' of their own definition; most left once they were introduced to the strict discipline and morality of life in the Taiping armies.[13] Some Taiping documents developed the vision in new directions. One of the most important, the 'Land Regulations of the Heavenly Dynasty', stipulated that private property be abolished, and that everyone henceforth live in groups of twenty-five families under a sargeant who would also serve as spiritual leader of the group. Land would be allocated to each family on the basis of need, and profits would go to a common treasury. One can easily imagine that this economic expression of the notion that 'all are equal before God' (the idea had Chinese roots as well), may have appealed to many who were unmoved by the Taiping religious claims. In any case, to the extent that the system was put in place, it permitted Taiping leaders to argue that the millennium had come, that paradise had been achieved on earth. This, indeed, was one of the themes most frequently sounded by Hong Xiuquan in his writings and annotations during his final years. Commenting on the Book of Revelation, for example, Hong wrote: 'What John saw was the celestial hall in heaven above. Heaven above and earth are alike. The new Jerusalem is the present Nanking.'[14]

Taiping beliefs did not forestall decline and defeat. Internecine struggles within the Taiping leadership resulted in bloody battles in which tens of thousands were killed. Chinese statesmen-generals built personal armies which slowly drove the Taipings back in on themselves. Hong Xiuquan died in 1864 and was 'buried in the bare ground, as he ha[d] taught the Taipings to do with their dead. No coffins are needed when one will rise so soon to heaven.'[15]

The Historiography of the Taiping Rebellion

Even this brief overview of Taiping history illustrates its nature as a densely charged site through which pass most major themes of modern and contemporary Chinese history: the Western arrival and its unsettling effect on Chinese culture and institutions; the assertion of Chinese ethnic nationalism;

the social misery which drove many to embrace desperate solutions and mass movements; and the effort to rethink Chinese society in revolutionary ways on a grand scale. In this light, it is not surprising that the Taiping Rebellion has generated an immense historiography. One Western scholar of the Taipings has enumerated more than 5,000 articles in Chinese on the subject;[16] Yale's Sterling library contains at least 120 book-length volumes in Chinese.[17] Western-language historiography on the Taipings cannot of course compare to that in Chinese in terms of volume, but is none the less substantial.[18] There was a significant Western presence in China at the moment of the Taiping Rebellion – missionaries, diplomats, soldiers, adventurers – which generated a large body of commentary and analysis.[19] And of course, modern Western scholars have devoted considerable attention to the event as well.

It would be both tedious and impractical to attempt to review all of this literature. Much of the Chinese literature is highly political, as one might imagine.[20] Communist historians have often chosen to interpret the Taiping movement as a 'peasant rebellion', a forerunner of the communist revolution which failed for want of proper leadership. Most have argued that Hong's ostensibly religious convictions were in fact nothing more than a clever mobilizational tool directed at superstitious peasants, and that Hong had set his sights on the Manchus and the rebellion from the very beginning. This means that although much detailed work on the Taipings has been carried out in China, little of what interests students of millenarian movements is treated seriously. On the other side of the Taiwan Straits, many historians writing under the Kuomintang Nationalist regime have found the Taipings too hot to handle. Although Sun Yat-sen, acknowledged on Taiwan as well as on the mainland as the father of the earliest Chinese revolution in 1911, referred frequently and positively to Hong Xiuquan as a fellow nationalist, Sun's successor Chiang Kai-shek identified rather with Zeng Guofan, the famous Confucian statesman-general who founded a personal army to suppress the Taipings. And since the installation of the Nationalist regime on Taiwan in 1949, close attention to the ethnic focus of the Taipings has been discouraged because of the delicate nature of the relationship between the mainlander-dominated government and the local, Taiwanese population.[21] The parallels which might be drawn between Hakkas under the Manchus and the Taiwanese under the mainlanders are a bit too close for comfort. Happily, one of the best and most prolific of China's scholars of the Taipings, Jen Yu-wen, spent most of his working life in Hong Kong where he had a freer hand than his colleagues in China or on Taiwan. Nevertheless, his work remains extremely partisan and highly favourable to the Taipings.[22]

Nineteenth-century Western historiography treating the Taipings is polemical as well, as might be imagined given the Taipings' attractive closeness to,

yet frightening distance from Christianity as understood by Westerners of the period. Missionaries took sides both for and against the Taipings; diplomats debated whether to back the Taipings or the Qing (most came down on the side of the Qing, given that the West had only recently signed advantageous treaties with them). Although most writings from this period make for fascinating reading, and some have retained a certain contemporary interest, in general too much has changed, both in China and the West, for analysis of these tomes to be of service to the task at hand. The next section of this chapter will limit itself to post-Second World War Western scholarship of Taipings, as it was really only during this period that study of Chinese modern history began to take shape as an academic discourse.

Once we have thus narrowed our focus, the material to be covered is surprisingly limited. In essence, we have: the works of political scientist Franz Michael, director of the Modern Chinese History Project at the University of Washington in the 1950s and 1960s, who argues that the Taiping Rebellion was unprecedented in Chinese history because of the Western character of its inspiration; the writings of the eminent historian, Philip Kuhn, who, like Michael, highlights the importance of the Western impact, but pays much more attention to the Chinese mechanisms by which the Christian message was transmitted and understood; and finally, the writings of two European sinologists, Rudolf Wagner and Barend ter Haar, and an American anthropologist, Robert Weller, all of whom emphasize the crucial role of Chinese religious and prophetic traditions in the shaping of the Taiping Rebellion.[23]

Franz Michael's *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents, Vol. I: History*, is the first important book-length treatment of the Taipings in the post-war period, and is based solidly on the large corpus of Taiping documents translated in volumes II and III of the same work. Although the basic narrative is competently presented (this was surely Michael's major goal and contribution), the interpretation put forward may well strike the current generation of scholars as curious, a blend of the well-known Weberian/Parsonian language of 'rationality' and a fervent anti-totalitarianism, clearly a product of the Cold War and the communist victory in China. In the context at hand, Michael comes down clearly on the side of the West as the causative factor in Hong's vision and the subsequent rebellion.

Michael emphasizes throughout the unprecedented nature of the rebellion, which 'contained, in the beliefs it propagated and the organization it established, elements so alien to China's tradition that they indicate to us in retrospect the first internal manifestation of the effect of an outer and inner crisis in China's traditional society'.[24] Although he does not tackle religion specifically as a major category of analysis, Michael nevertheless makes religion – Christianity *as misinterpreted by Hong and his fellow lieutenants* – the key to

his interpretation, which seems to be that intentional and unintentional warping of Christian ideas subverted what might have been a positive injection of dynamic new ideas from the West, giving them a pernicious, 'totalitarian' flavour.

Hong's vision is interpreted as evidence of mental illness,[25] and this in turn is cited as the source of Hong's reinterpretation of 'standard' Western Protestant doctrine. In generous moments, Michael simply faults Hong for incomplete understanding. More often, though, Michael's characterization of Hong's beliefs goes considerably further. Hong's annotations to the Old and New Testaments, for example, 'are indicative not only of his lack of understanding but also of his totally disturbed state of mind. They are often the incoherent, rambling, and unintelligible remarks of a sick man.'[26] Indeed, 'incoherent' is the word most often employed by Michael to portray Hong's 'fantastic' visions and statements.

How then did Hong spread his beliefs, found a movement, build an army and establish a government? In part, Michael ascribes these successes to Hong's 'undefinable charisma'. Most of these successes, however, are attributed to the machinations of the brilliant if diabolical Yang Xiuqing, the clever foil to Hong's 'incoherence', who seized on the possibilities offered by Hong's vision to become the Holy Ghost (or the vehicle thereof), seizing power and prestige for himself as he charted the military and political future of the movement. His self-identification as the voice of the Holy Ghost is described as a 'crude religious hoax',[27] and the ultimate failure of the movement is described as a product of Yang's dishonesty: Yang 'had been a brilliant organizer and strategist … But his farcical impersonation of God the Father and of the Holy Ghost did not take the place of real ideological leadership.'[28]

By 'real ideological leadership' Michael apparently means a combination of a proper understanding of Christianity and a close attention to organizational detail, as befits those living in the modern world. Michael strikes this theme particularly in his discussion of Hong Ren'gan, Hong Xiuquan's cousin who had frequented Western missionaries in Hong Kong before joining the Taipings in the spring of 1859 in a major leadership role. Michael depicts Ren'gan as 'a man of strong religious faith, of character, and of great political and strategic vision. The program that [he] proposed [which involved certain modernizing projects] showed that he was the first of the Taiping leaders who understood the world of modern national states and who regarded his Christian beliefs as a basis for a new Chinese national order.'[29] In the long run, however, Hong Ren'gan failed in one of his most important self-appointed tasks, that of introducing genuine Protestant Christianity to the Taipings, a Christianity not only purged of visions and voices, but including as well a properly bourgeois defence of private property and the rule of law.[30]

Such an ideology might have produced the stability necessary for the construction of a healthy organization, but Hong's madness, misinterpretation of Christianity, and inattention to detail permitted Yang and others to build their own personal cliques, as so often happens in totalitarian regimes.

As in many analyses of totalitarian movements, questions of compliance, adherence and belief are paid relatively little attention. Hong's followers are generally depicted as passive and easily swayed by promises of a better life (which, of course, may not be untrue in some cases). Ultimately, however, Michael is less interested in why the movement worked than in why it eventually failed, and the unconvincing suggestion that the Taipings somehow prefigured China's modern 'totalitarian' experience seems to have distracted him from any attempt to understand the movement from within. In any case, from the perspective developed in this chapter, Michael's analysis clearly identifies the source of Taiping messianism as Western Christianity, albeit a Western Christianity distorted by Hong's mental incapacity and Yang's overweening ambition.

In 1964, the same year that Franz Michael penned the preface to his volume, Philip Kuhn, the next Taiping scholar to be discussed, defended his doctoral dissertation on local militarization in response to the Taiping Rebellion. Michael seems not to have returned to Taiping history or related issues; by 1966, when his Taiping volumes came out, he was already director of the Institute for Sino-Soviet Studies at George Washington University, and most of his later publications deal with issues related to Chinese communism. By contrast, Kuhn continued to work on the Taipings, publishing his *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796–1864*, in 1970, an important article on the Taipings, 'Origins of the Taiping Vision: Cross-cultural Dimensions of a Chinese Rebellion', in 1977, and a narrative-interpretive overview of the rebellion for the *Cambridge History of China* in 1978. Kuhn's work on the Taipings is more thoughtful than that of Michael, in part because he had Michael's pioneering work to build on, in part because American historical scholarship in general entered a more critical, self-reflective phase over the course of the 1960s. Although challenged to some degree by more recent scholarship which accords more primacy to Chinese religion than did Kuhn, Kuhn's general treatment remains a standard in the English-speaking world, more than twenty years after its original publication.

Like Michael, Kuhn notes the watershed nature of the Taiping Rebellion, in which 'foreign contact itself had provided a new historical catalyst: an alien religion that generated a furious assault on China's existing social structure and values'.[31] But Kuhn's views on the subject are more complex than these remarks may suggest. Although a student of John Fairbank, who

has been accused of being an apologist for Western imperialism because of his argument that traditional China, if hardly a changeless society, had never-theless fallen into a moribund rut, and needed an external shock, Kuhn was none the less determined to re-examine the periodization and evolution of China's history from an internal, Chinese point of view, to write a 'China-centered history' which would still acknowledge the important role played by the West.[32]

For the purposes of the present discussion, we can narrow Kuhn's in-terpretive innovations to two: a close reading of Liang Afa's 'Good Words to Admonish the Age'; and an equally close reading of the host audience which translated Hong's vision into a mass movement – the Hakkas of Guangxi. Throughout, Kuhn illustrates how a culturally determined reading of Hong's Christian vision fitted the social needs of the beleaguered Hakkas, and pro-pelled them towards action to realize the implications of the vision.

Kuhn analyses Liang's tract as an example of cross-cultural translation, and highlights both the choices Liang made in reducing the fundamentalist Protestant message to a Chinese tract, as well as the implications that Hong could have read into Liang's message. He notes that Liang's work is 'un-systematic' in its presentation, mixing long quotes from the Bible (in a variety of classical Chinese) with glosses and sermons from Liang in the vernacular. The chronological order of the Bible is ignored, and events chosen more or less at random to make specific points. Although the New Testament was Liang's primary source, the main focus of Liang's attention was God the Father (Jehovah), rather than Jesus the Son. In sum, 'the work's stark funda-mentalist message hammers home the omnipotence of God, the degradation of sin and idolatry, and the awesome choice between salvation or damnation'.[33]

While noting, like Michael, the unsophisticated rendering of the Christian message, Kuhn's objective is to read Liang's Christian message *from within Chinese culture*, and to note political implications which Western Christian sources may not have intended. First, in his indictment of Chinese society, Liang quite naturally employs a vocabulary suggesting that China's moral decay may be linked to the decline of the dynasty itself, the notion that, over time, a decline in imperial virtue works its way through all of Chinese society, producing the conditions which call forth imperial challengers and the renewal of the mandate. Second, Kuhn notes that the term 'Heavenly Kingdom', clearly important to any Christian evangelist, was glossed by Liang as referring to both other-wordly as well as *this-worldly* phenomena, suggesting that paradise might be achieved in the here and now. Third, ignoring the chrono-logy of the Bible, Liang suggests that Jesus's coming may be a cyclical event, recurring repeatedly throughout history. Finally, Liang's presentation seemed to suggest that salvation was not an individual, but a *social* undertaking,

lending a political character to what, in most Western traditions, is a thoroughly individual event. In sum, Christianity as presented by Liang was potentially explosive in the Chinese context, lending itself to political readings unlikely in the West for both cultural and social reasons.

However, Kuhn is not content merely to illustrate the power of the discursive text. Instead, he spends as much time on the analysis of the receptacle of the message – the Hakkas of Guangxi – as on the vehicle. Such an analysis anchors the movement in the realities of China's social structure, as well as filling two rather large gaps in Michael's interpretation: the overemphasis on Hong's mental illness and the depiction of Hong's foot soldiers as passive. More specifically, Kuhn hangs his analysis of the reception of Hong's fundamentalist message on the issue of ethnicity, emphasizing how the Guangxi Hakkas' status as an oppressed minority predisposed them to embrace a message which promised their salvation.

The argument is brilliant in its simplicity. Unlike Hong's family and neighbours near Canton, the Guangxi Hakkas desperately *needed* salvation as a group and saw in Hong's message a powerful metaphor for their own social misery. And once the God Worshipping Society achieved a certain membership and social presence, the need to see their salvation realized in concrete terms propelled the already militarized Hakkas towards conflict, first with other groups in the eastern Guangxi region, and eventually with the Qing state. Indeed, the inclusion of Manchus as ethnic enemies/demons was both logical and necessary: Hong's universal God could hardly limit his salvational powers to Hakkas alone (and presumably would have been extended even to the Manchus had they acknowledged Hong's claims).

Although Kuhn was clearly deeply interested in culturally-conditioned readings of the Christian message, his analysis does not extend to the role of Chinese popular religion as a causative factor in the Taiping movement. His emphasis throughout is rather on the 'transmission of systems of ideas across wide cultural gaps',[34] and on the explosive power produced by new readings of old ideas in specific social contexts. Without denying the importance of the Western, Christian spark, more recent research has shifted the emphasis to the Chinese side of the equation. To some degree, this shift reflects changes in contemporary Chinese society. The remarkable resurgence of popular culture and popular religion which has accompanied China's repudiation of many aspects of its Maoist experience has had important effects on Western scholarship of China as well. Among other things, the unmistakable *Chineseness* of this resurgence has led many scholars to re-examine their assumptions regarding the centrality of the Western impact on China's modern history. In addition, the re-evaluation of the Taipings owes much to the disciplines within which recent scholars have worked. Michael and Kuhn, as historians and

political scientists, were primarily concerned with proper placement of the Taipings within the meta-narrative of modern Chinese history, a meta-narrative which had as a central theme Sino-Western conflict. Among the scholars to be examined below, two are sinologists, who by training ground themselves in the Chinese textual tradition rather than in any historical narrative per se, and an anthropologist, who, while not unconcerned with narratives, is less constrained to render a judgment on the Taipings in the context of modern Chinese history.

Let us begin with Rudolf Wagner, a classically trained German sinologist whose 1982 monograph, *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Rebellion*, represents a major challenge to the work of Michael and Kuhn in the weight that he gives to Chinese religion as the dominant force behind the Taiping movement and rebellion. Like Kuhn, Wagner argues that neither Hong Xiuquan's 'mental illness' nor his 'incoherent' rendering of Christianity (which, Wagner insists, was a fairly accurate rendering of the revivalist fundamentalism of the era) is relevant to an understanding of the unfolding of the movement. But where Kuhn highlights ethnicity and the 'close fit' between the Guangxi Hakkas' social reality and the fundamentalist message preached by Hong, Wagner, influenced by his training in the Chinese textual tradition, examines the conceptual categories Hong and his followers would have employed to make sense of Hong's experience.

He begins with the crucial observation, unremarked in other studies of the Taipings, that Hong's vision, regardless of the source of its inspiration, should be understood in the context of the long history of dream and vision interpretation throughout centuries of Chinese history. Although frequently confused with spirit possessions, which often result in illness and require the services of an exorcist (Hong's family did call an exorcist, but Hong refused to see him), visions, properly authenticated, are deemed to be meaningful communications from the gods, not individual flights of fancy, and are universally respected in Chinese culture as predictors of future events and guides for behaviour. Visions are authenticated when events in the waking world correspond with those seen in the vision world. During Hong's vision, the Heavenly Father had told him that he would one day find a book which would explain to him the meaning of his experience. The discovery of Liang Afa's tract thus made his vision real in two senses: it reassured Hong that he was not mad, and it identified the cast of characters encountered in his dream. Wagner explains much of the unfolding of the Taiping movement, including its turn to violence, as a conscious or unconscious effort to make manifest the totality of Hong's vision.

Wagner's focus on the cultural interpretation of visions is extremely important. The Western student of the Taiping movement, reading the account

of Hong's vision in the light of what he knows both about the Western presence in China and the future unfolding of the Taiping movement, automatically assumes that Hong and the Chinese who heard him speak about his vision must have reacted with consternation to this obviously alien 'visitation'. Wagner illustrates that such was not necessarily the case. Wagner also illustrates that the *content* of Hong's vision, so obviously Christian and Western to the Western observer, was much less so to Hong and his followers. According to Wagner, Hong identified the grand old man in his vision as *shangdi*, a fruitfully ambiguous term: it was the term chosen by foreign missionaries to translate the concept of the Christian God Jehovah; it was also an abbreviated manner of referring to the highest god in the Chinese folk religious pantheon; it was in addition the term used by leaders of the pre-imperial Shang dynasty (seventeenth to the eleventh centuries BCE) to refer to their personal deity – and perforce the deity of their dynasty as well. The conflation of these quite different meanings permitted Hong to elaborate what Wagner calls the 'salvation history' of China, whose central narrative is as follows: Jehovah, the God, or *shangdi*, of Hong's vision, was originally unitary and universal. The Chinese had worshipped him during the earliest period of their history, before 'idolatrous practices' had displaced the worship of God, leading the Chinese to abandon their true faith. In this light, Hong is not the vehicle of a *foreign* faith; Hong is the vehicle of the *one, true, universal faith*, the embrace of which constitutes a return to the *original and true* native traditions. Hong himself is not the *Chinese* son of God, but the *second* son of God whose majesty extends throughout the universe.

Here it must be emphasized that Wagner is *not* arguing that Taiping Christianity became a form of Chinese popular religion. The beliefs and practices of the Taipings were in many ways radically different from those of popular religion and the Taipings defined themselves in opposition to the world of popular religion, as did Daoists, Buddhists and Confucians. Wagner is illustrating instead the logic Hong employed to understand and to realize his vision, a logic which was wholly Chinese, suggesting that the experience of religious conversion and messianic rebellion was, to the participants, wholly Chinese as well, that they were in no way conscious of acting out a foreign doctrine.

Anthropologist Robert Weller's *Resistance, Chaos, and Control in China: Taiping Rebels, Taiwanese Ghosts, and Tiananmen* builds on the author's previous work on Chinese popular religion[35] to examine the important theme of resistance in the context of modern Chinese history. The section devoted to the Taipings reflects recent Chinese scholarship as well as Weller's own fieldwork in the eastern Guangxi region which spawned the Taiping movement more than a century ago. Like Wagner, Weller emphasizes the importance of

Chinese religion to our understanding of the Taiping Rebellion, but his interpretation differs significantly from that of Wagner.

For Weller, the most important period in the evolution of the Taiping movement was between 1845 and 1849 when Hong and Feng were largely absent from Guangxi, allowing local leadership to emerge and local religious practices to flourish. Hong's original vision, according to Weber, was 'idiosyncratic' and Hong himself was seen as 'eccentric'; Hong may have understood his vision in the light of Chinese prophetic traditions, but this is hardly, according to Weber, what gave it force as a social movement.[36] Indeed, it was only when Hong's unique and alien vision had been translated into local idiom that it could gain a mass following. This translation occurred in two steps. During the first, which stretched roughly from 1845 to 1847, Hong's God proved his power by effecting cures and by defeating other local gods in 'contests of strength'. In the second, from late 1847 to early 1850, 'attacks on other gods ended, to be replaced by the charismatic power of spirit possession'.[37] By 'spirit possession' Weller refers not only to the emergence of Yang Xiuqing and other future leaders, who, as noted above, fell frequently into trances, but also to the God Worshippers at large. Taiping sources record more than 200 cases of spirit possession during this period, notes Weller, which is almost certainly but a small percentage of the number of cases that occurred. Aside from the particular identification of the possessing god, such spirit possession was in no way different from that widely practised throughout Chinese popular religion. It was the mass character of this spirit possession, Weller argues (basing himself to some degree on comparisons with similar movements elsewhere in the world), which made Hong's vision a mass religion and, eventually, a mass movement. Thus, where Michael sees misinterpretation, and Kuhn ethnicity, where Wagner sees a tradition of prophetic interpretation, Weller sees *mass spirit possession*, thus suggesting that it was the power of Chinese popular culture to assimilate a Western-inspired vision to its own practices which lent force to the vision.

Although both Wagner and Weller make credible cases for understanding the Taiping Rebellion through the lens of China's own religious heritage, neither addresses directly the question of the origin of the *millenarian* aspects of the movement. Barend ter Haar's work on the 'demons of the Heavenly Kingdom'[38] builds on his own extensive research in the history of Chinese religion to identify the native messianic and millenarian traditions which may well have nourished the Taipings. His demonstration consists of two parts: the description of a 'demonic messianic paradigm', present in China for hundreds of years and widely understood (if not necessarily embraced) across divisions of locality and social class; and the evidence of the impact of this paradigm on the Taiping movement.

The 'demonic messianic paradigm' builds on the widespread Chinese belief in the harmful power of demons, which exist in a variety of forms (chiefly human and animal) and are responsible for a wide range of disasters and misery: illness, famine, epidemics, floods and droughts. Demons are extremely common. All traditional Chinese buildings incorporate demon-fighting elements into their structures. Exorcists are regularly summoned to deal with pesky, demon-inflicted maladies. Several of the major ritual cycles of Chinese popular religion are directed towards the propitiation of demon hordes. It is hardly surprising, given the manifest evil and near ubiquity of demons, that their power came to take on eschatological connotations. Nor is it surprising that the same imaginations which saw the work of demons in flood, famine and barbarian invasion would conjure up a messiah, who would descend on a prophetically predetermined date to save all believers from the pain and suffering of the end of the world.

This complex of ideas first took form in the long and troubled interregnum between the Han and Tang dynasties (220–589 CE), and, although it did not generate a rich textual tradition, continued to exercise a certain influence over the centuries, especially in times of disaster and/or rebellion. Many if not most Chinese would have been able to identify the saviour figures of the tradition, as well as the most frequently used symbols and the broad contours of the discourse. This paradigm was only marginally attached to the dominant strains of Chinese religion or even Chinese popular religion (although the saviour could claim the same mandate of heaven as the Chinese emperor), and existed as a sort of free-floating set of signifiers and *dramatis personae* which religious visionaries or cunning rebels could employ to flesh out their own dreams and aspirations in a manner likely to strike a familiar chord with certain audiences. Although it would be tedious to present the evidence to a non-sinological audience, ter Haar has convincingly connected this paradigm with an impressive number of religious and rebellious groups (including the Triads) over several centuries of Chinese history.[39]

The elaboration of this paradigm permits ter Haar to cast the Taipings in yet another new perspective. He seems to suggest, for instance, that Hong's original 1837 vision may not have been inspired by contact with Christian missionaries or Christian tracts, and that these elements may have been read back into the vision subsequent to Hong's perusal of Liang Afa's tract in 1843. Furthermore, while all previous scholars have emphasized Hong's status as an aspiring *lettré*, ter Haar puts a new spin on the importance of Hakka ethnicity to the evolution of the movement by noting that most Hakkas were regularly initiated into 'exorcist ritual knowledge'. Ter Haar seems to suggest, then, that Hong's original vision had little or nothing to do with Christianity.

Ter Haar follows other scholars in emphasizing the contribution to the

Taiping movement made by local Guangxi leadership in the late 1840s. However, instead of highlighting Hakka ethnicity or spirit possession, ter Haar sees further evidence of the demonological paradigm in the additions made by Yang and others to the beliefs and practices of Hong's God Worshipping Society. He notes specifically their calls for the assistance of heavenly soldiers and heavenly generals – the adjuncts of the saviour in the demonological messianic paradigm – as well as their identification of Taiping leaders with stellar constellations, another practice associated with the demonic paradigm. Other evidence includes: the Taiping choice of Nanjing, which had been the target of other movements fuelled by demonic messianic traditions, as their 'Heavenly Capital' and earthly safe haven; the 'identification of the apocalyptic threat as illnesses' (Yang Xiuqing claimed to take on the sins of all believers, and styled himself the 'Redeemer'); the identification of barbarian invasion as an eschatological sign, which helps to explain Taiping antagonism towards the non-Han Manchus; and the expectation that a great general would come from the West to assist the Taipings in their efforts.[40] In ter Haar's apt summary:

> the demonological substratum has substantially shaped the development of Heavenly Kingdom lore from Hong Xiuquan's 'original' vision in 1837 onwards. With the advent of Yang Xiuqing … this demonological dimension was developed in a specific messianic direction. This directly caused the expansion of the demonic category in Hong Xiuquan's vision from mainly local deities to include real people, more specifically the Manchus, as well as their representatives and allies.

Concluding Remarks

In a prescient remark in his 1967 review of Franz Michael's work, Philip Kuhn objected to Michael's characterization of the Taiping Rebellion as the 'first major break' with the Chinese tradition: 'Was Chinese culture so simple a construct', Kuhn mused, 'that there could not be found within it a number of alternative, coexisting traditions to be drawn upon in periods of crisis? … Research in this sphere is likely in the end to make the Taiping movement seem less rather than more "alien"'.[41] As this chapter has demonstrated, this is precisely what has happened. Interpretations of the Taiping Rebellion have evolved from an emphasis on the unsettling power of Western ideas to a focus on the Chinese mechanisms which effected the translation of these Western ideas, and, finally, to an exploration of the indigenous Chinese millenarian discourse which underlay what Western observers and scholars have taken be a Chinese reaction to Christianity. Ter Haar's work on the Taipings (which, one should note, is only one section of an article devoted to the demonological

messianic paradigm) hardly mentions the Western presence at all. For the purposes of this chapter and indeed this volume, the main point to draw from this is that one can no longer speak of the Taiping Rebellion as a pure example of the impact of Western millenarianism on Chinese culture. Chinese millenarian discourse played a central role in this most 'foreign' of Chinese rebellions.

Will we someday write a history of the Taiping Rebellion where the West is viewed as epiphenomenal? Despite Kuhn's remarks in his review of Michael, he notes elsewhere that the Taiping Rebellion displayed obvious differences in ideology and organization when compared with other nineteenth-century Chinese rebellions, and that 'it is hard to imagine the mobilization of the Hakkas without the injection of the new faith'.[42] We might add that although the findings of Wagner, Weller and ter Haar are all credible on their own terms, they are not necessarily consistent, and Kuhn's conclusions about the role of the new faith in the mobilization of the Hakkas still await a definitive rebuttal. In fact, reading through Taiping documents, one is struck *both* by the thoroughly foreign vocabulary (the names of Old Testament prophets and places, for example, transliterated into awkward Chinese) *and* by the seeming unconcern on the part of the Taipings with the manifest 'foreignness' of the materials, as well as the delight expressed by the Taipings when discovering that foreigners worshipped the same God they did (this discovery represented both confirmation of Taiping beliefs and the possibility of forging a larger community of believers). This suggests perhaps that 'traditional' Chinese culture was more flexible and open than we have tended to believe, or, more broadly, that cultural systems are perhaps not complex linguistic wholes, but rather flexible grammars which pay relatively little attention to the 'national origin' of syntactic units. This may be what Jonathan Spence wishes to convey in his masterful *God's Chinese Son*, the most recent book-length treatment of the Taipings, which leaves us with the arresting image of Hong Xiuquan annotating and rewriting the Bible as enemy armies closed in on his capital. Hong's immediate preoccupations were to write himself and his vision in, and to edit out passages (such as those discussing sexual relations between family members) deemed inappropriate to his Chinese following. Yet his ultimate goal was to renew the Bible, through incorporation of his own experience and vision, so that the holy scripture might be both up-to-date and universal in its appeal. Clearly, 'native' and 'foreign' were not absolute categories to Hong, but rather temporary misunderstandings to be surmounted as he reworked a transcendent discourse. The role of this discourse in the Taiping Rebellion is questionable, but the fact that Hong could so readily locate the history of Christianity within the cultural and religious history of China suggests the complexity of cross-cultural exchange and the textured richness of both 'native' and 'foreign' discourse.

Millennialism in Modern Iranian History

Juan R. I. Cole

The coming of a messiah and the advent of the Last Days, in which a sudden transformation of society would occur, have been an important set of themes in early modern and modern Shi'ite Islam, and these have been remarkably intertwined with Iranian rebellions, revolutions and state formation. Millennialism has had an especially significant career in Iran, which is all the more appropriate in so far as there is a sense in which ancient Iranians were among the first to invent and combine many of the basic motifs that go into this particular sort of movement. Social scientists have only recently explored these themes systematically. Bruce Lincoln argued that earlier, positivist, Marxist and structural-functionalist paradigms expected religion to be a pillar of order and actually to dampen revolutionary fervour, causing students of revolution to ignore religious movements. This paradigm of religion as always reactionary broke down in the 1960s and after, both because of research findings like those of the 'Anglo-Marxist' school (Eric Hobsbawm, Christopher Hill), who looked at radical religious groups in the English Revolution or in Italy and Spain, and because of real-world developments such as the rise of liberation theology in Latin America. Lincoln proposed that there were religions of order favoured by the elite (Confucianism, Anglicanism) and religions of the oppressed that could be employed for oppositional purposes (Taoism, Quakerism). He further saw oppositional religions as passive, active and revolutionary.[1] One question I want to raise is what the Iranian experience tells us about these distinctions.

Many academics posit that millennialist motifs are usually found in non-metropolitan communities (such as villages in rugged areas of Europe or in the colonized global South) where no distinction can be made between the religious and the political. Adherents, they say, express political and normative goals without possessing the practical means to attain them, resorting instead to a belief in magic, miraculous healing and other powers, and supernatural

transformation. Those who have seen millennialist movements as an irrational form of politics debate those who see it to be cultural and symbolic in nature and 'rational' if one takes its premises into account. Eric Hobsbawm saw millennialists as oppressed peasants who resorted to 'archaic' means doomed to failure (such as banding about a local prophet) to protest their exploitation, in contrast to the 'modern' method of joining a political party.[2] Karen Fields in her study of the Watchtower in central Africa argued that Hobsbawm and other rationalists were mistaken in trying to draw such a distinction. She showed that contemporary converts to the Jehovah's Witnesses could not be seen as more 'archaic' in their social action than most other communities of the time, or even than the colonial state officers in what is now Zambia, who often took seriously missionary warnings that heresy equalled social disorder. She also questioned the central antinomies that have structured debate about the nature of millennialism: rationality and irrationality, politics and culturally symbolic action.[3] I shall come back after presenting the Iranian material to take sides in these debates.

Observers have often been concerned with weighting causes to pinpoint which ones are key in kicking off a major millennialist movement. Michael Barkun also asserted that disaster and dislocation lay behind the outbreak of millennialist movements, and some have maintained that European colonization has been among the chief such causes of dislocation. Michael Adas put the main explanatory weight on the rise of what he called a 'prophet' (and what those in the Weberian tradition would call a charismatic leader) whose attractive personality and ability to formulate an appealing message are central to the rise of the movement. Adas discounts social crisis and denies that class grievances play much of a role in millennialism given that it most often takes the form of mass, multi-class movements. Resource mobilization theorists do not appear to have been very often attracted to the study of millennialist movements per se, but they would put explanatory emphasis on the group's ability to mobilize resources to achieve its aims. More recently, O'Leary has shifted the terms of the debate by focusing on rhetoric. That is, the determinative factor is not exploitation or social crisis or charisma or material resources, but rather the ability of the leader to phrase millennialist themes in a convincing and appealing way for adherents. For O'Leary, apocalyptic rhetoric functions as a solution to the problem of evil, resolving it by positing an end to the present world of wickedness and a future utopia wherein saints are rewarded and the iniquitous scourged. In nice synchronization with the linguistic turn of the 1980s and 1990s, causality is now attributed neither to structural factors such as social breakdown nor to personalistic ones such as the rise of a talented prophet, but rather to discourse itself. We shall come back at the end of this chapter to some of these issues.

Leaving aside the question of causality for that of typology, for a moment, I maintain that millennialism is characterized by a number of distinct motifs that are present in varying degrees in the movements social scientists have so denominated. After Smith (who draws on the work of Peter Berger and of Anders Nygren), I define a religious motif as an attempt to employ 'Weberian ideal typification' to provide a 'means of description' of what is most significant about a particular religious movement, and to trace these clusters of attributes in their historical development.[4] Like Smith, however, I reject the essentialist overtones of the original Lund school notion of motif. Rather, I see millennialism as a set of premises, conventions and ways of reasoning, which are analogous to a genre in literature, with the motifs representing the equivalent of specific techniques to naturalize this symbolic and political form of culture and social action. These motifs are underpinned by shared texts and approaches to them, by a sort of intertextuality among adherents. I would like to plot social movements on a graph, as more or less millennialist according to whether five motifs are present, and as more or less activist depending on what sort of chiliastic action is taken. I will discuss the main motifs of millennialist movements under the headings of pessimism, prophecy, apocalypse, charismatic leadership, messianism and utopia. The presence or absence of these motifs will help graph movements along one axis. The other axis is determined by the range of practical action, or praxis, i.e. the actions taken by the millennialist group before the end comes. Social movements can thus be high in millennialism and high in activism (which should predict severe tensions with mainstream society), or high in millennialism but low in activism (wherein tensions will be less severe and mainly matters of coding the millennialists as marginal).

To take the first motif, such groups are often characterized by extreme pessimism, a stark sense that the existing society is horribly flawed and, indeed, doomed. The pessimism often takes the form of dualism – though sometimes groups are sophisticated enough to demonize more than one Other. The vehemence of the millennialist critique of existing society and its near-celebration of an imminent cataclysm distinguish it from simple social critique. O'Leary sees prophecy as a particularly compelling rhetorical device. Millennialists frequently believe that a time of divine requital has been set, and that it can be discerned by some method in scripture or in an ancient and valued text. The method employed is not a commonsense or rational one, but rather involves extracting premises from the texts that are not immediately obvious. Rather than analysis or contextualization, millennialist hermeneutics depend upon a cumulative, analogical or conspiratorial reading in which little is contingent and even seemingly mundane statements are read so as to cast light on the present and immediate future. Millennialists believe that the world is

about to end or to suffer enormous damage. Overall they do not believe that this transformation will take place by means of ordinary political or military changes, but rather that it will be sudden and supernatural. I would not wish, however, to make the supernatural element of the sudden change wholly determinative of whether a belief is millennial. In part this is because millennialists have often been quite willing to read what others would see as ordinary political or military events as possessing supernatural significance.

As Adas argues so forcefully, millennialists frequently gather around a charismatic leader to whom they impute supernatural knowledge and power, and to whom they are fervently devoted. In many instances this leader is felt to be a forerunner for the coming of the apocalypse or for the coming of an even greater figure, a messiah. Thus, another key motif in millennialism is messianism, the belief that a cosmic figure will shortly appear to re-establish order and restore justice. Among Iran's Shi'ite majority in modern times, this figure is usually associated with the Hidden Imam, the twelfth in the line of succession after the Prophet Muhammad, who is held to have disappeared as a small child into a supernatural realm. Folk Shi'ism also awaited the return of the martyred Imam Husayn (the third Imam) and even of Jesus. Finally, I turn my attention to utopia, the vision elaborated by the group of the future, post-apocalyptic society. This future society can be in the afterlife, as with the Jehovah's Witnesses saints, or it can be on earth, as with the 1,000-year reign of Christ expected by some fundamentalists. As for praxis, some millennialist movements are quietist, others activist, some pacific, others militant.

If O'Leary is correct that millennialism is most of all a form of theodicy, an explanation for the existence of evil, then the more important features of this kind of theodicy were certainly formulated by the ancient Iranian Zoroastrians, perhaps before anyone else. They believed, after all, in an epochal struggle between the good God, Ahura Mazda, and the evil demigod, Ahriman, which was to be determined in part by whether human beings gave their support to Ahura Mazda by living a life of good thought, good speech and good deeds. Even to lie, in Zoroastrianism, was to defect to the enemy. The dualism frequently characteristic of millennialist pessimism thus pervades this religion. It saw the universe as having a beginning, as developing over time, and as experiencing a future renewal (*frashkart*). Zoroastrians in the period from about 600 BCE believed not only in a prophet, Zarathustra, but also in a future saviour, the Saoshyant, who would arise after three millennia. The last days are characterized by a struggle between the Azhi Dahaka (dragon or world-serpent), who escapes his imprisonment on Mount Damavand, and who is fought by Thraetaona (Faridun) or Keresaspa.[5]

These beliefs about prophetic charisma, prophecy, a future saviour, the

renewal of the world, the final cosmic battle between good and evil, and the resurrection, did not disappear when Iran was conquered by the Arab Muslims from the seventh century, and as, over the four or five subsequent centuries, most Iranians adopted Islam. Rather, they were melded in Iranian folk culture with Islamic beliefs (many of them similar and quite likely influenced by Zoroastrianism directly or indirectly in the first place).[6] Shi'ite Islam in any case had a strong millennialist tradition of its own. Twelver Shi'ites believed that the Prophet Muhammad should have been succeeded both politically and spiritually by his House or family, beginning with his son-in-law and cousin 'Ali, and then the lineal descendants of 'Ali and the Prophet's daughter, Fatimah. They believe that the twelfth in the line of these imams or vicars of the prophet, Muhammad b. Hasan al–Mahdi, went into supernatural occultation as a young child. They say he entered a supernatural realm from which he would one day return to restore the world to justice as a 'rightly guided one' (Mahdi) or a 'standing one' (Qa'im – a term derived from Aramaic Christianity and the Samaritans). The history of Shi'ism has been rife with millennialist movements, many of which had a major impact on society and state. The long-lived medieval Abbasid dynasty, for instance, which ruled both Iran and what is now the Arab world for centuries, was brought to power by such a movement in the middle of the eighth century. But our focus here is only on those occurring since 1500.

The first major movement with millennialist overtones in modern Iran (if we take 'modern' to include the early modern era) was the Safavis, as has been argued with particular force by Said Amir Arjomand.[7] The leaders of the Safavi Sufi order, based in the city of Ardabil in northwestern Iran, had been ordinary urban Sunni Sufis earlier in their history, though they probably innovated in allowing very large numbers of Muslims to be initiated. Sufism, an Islamic form of mysticism, began initially as a form of individual piety and asceticism, influenced by Syrian Christianity and (probably) Khurasani Buddhism. Sufism could often be individualist and form a vehicle for the promotion of heterodox beliefs.[8] From about the twelfth century, Sufis throughout the Muslim world began organizing themselves into orders or brotherhoods (Aramaic [Ar.] sing. *tariqah*), with a hierarchy that descended from the inspired leader (*shaykh* or *pir*, both meaning 'elder'), his 'lieutenants' (sing. *khalifah*), often in other cities, and the mass of adepts or *murid*s.[9]

In the fifteenth century the Safavi leaders intermarried with the White Sheep confederation that ruled western Iran, sought temporal power, and came to lead Türkmen tribespeople in holy war against Christian populations on the Black Sea and in the rugged Caucasus. As the Türkmen were displaced by the Ottoman bureaucratic state, which had been founded with the help of the tribes' cavalrymen but which increasingly found them an embarrassment

and source of disorder in eastern Anatolia, they moved east into the Caucasus. When their way north was blocked by effective resistance from the Christian tribes of the mountains there, they moved into Iran. About half of Iran's population consisted of pastoral nomads in the pre-modern period, with cities typically constituting between 10 and 20 per cent of the population and the rest being peasants. Pastoralists had enormous military advantages over the sedentary population, in so far as their way of life made them a 'natural' cavalry, but often they suffered from being divided against one another by clan feuds. Sufism and pastoralism were two major social formations in early modern Iran, but they had not usually been melded in the past, the one being largely urban and organized, with leaders who were frequently literate, the other being rural and illiterate and usually lacking much formal organization.

The urban Safavis lent support to pastoralist practices of raiding in Christian areas by coding them as a form of struggle for Islam and identifying Sufis as fighters for the faith (*ghazi*). One cannot know for sure, but it seems that the heterodox beliefs of the Sufis were mixed with the shamanistic beliefs of the semi-Muslim Türkmen to produce a powerful new political and religious ideology. The leader of the Safavi Sufi order was no mere man who had thrown in with tribal forces; he was a manifestation of God himself. The Türkmen adepts went so far as to worship their new leaders, as Khunji tells us of the fifteenth-century Safavi leaders: 'they openly called Shaykh Junayd "God" and his son [Shaykh Haydar] "Son of God" … in his praise they said "He is the Living one, there is no God but he …"'[10] The tone among the Safavis seems at this point closer to the ecstatic Bastami than to the 'sober' Sufi traditions of their forebears. Moreover, they found that melding Bastami's theopathic rhetoric with claims of political authority proved a heady brew.

The segmentary politics of the tribes, with their clan feuds, were overcome to some extent by the charisma of the Safavi God-Pir and by the hierarchical organizational framework of the Sufi order. So it came to pass that the Türkmen conquered Iran for their new Safavi chieftains, the most recent of which, Isma'il, had become a Twelver Shi'ite under the influence of his tutor while in hiding in Lahijan near the Caspian as a child. But while Isma'il was led to view urban, literate Twelver Shi'ism with favour, his own beliefs grouped him with what most Shi'ite ulama or clergymen would have called 'ghulah' or theological 'extremists'. He exalted 'Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet (whom Shi'ites regard as the latter's rightful vicar after his death) as divine, and referred to himself in the same terms (even speaking of himself as 'of the same essence' with 'Ali). Isma'il asserted that he was a manifestation of God and demanded that his followers prostrate (*sijdah*) themselves before him (something most Muslims would do only when praying to God).[11] In similar religious and social movements of fifteenth-century Iran,

we know that the warriors who fought for their god-chieftain believed both him and themselves invulnerable when they went into battle, and there is some reason to think that the Türkmen warriors for the Safavids held this belief, as well, at least early on.

The fourteen-year-old Isma'il's 'sortie' from Gilan against the White Sheep forces, which resulted in his conquest of Tabriz (1501) and ultimately of Iran, was spoken of by the chroniclers as a *khuruj*, a word usually employed to describe the advent of the Mahdi or guided one of Islam. The earliest chronicle of Isma'il's wars says that before he attacked the ruler of Shirvan, he engaged in divination to discover the will of the Imams, and it was they who sent him against Shirvan.[12] A later chronicler reported a prophecy allegedly spoken by astrologers to a White Sheep ruler about the Safavis, which said, 'the sun will never set on their state until the advent of the Lord of the Age, at which time [Shah Isma'il] will ride in his train, wielding his sword'. The same source says, after describing the very young Isma'il's conquest of Shirvan, that he was among the signs of the near advent of the Lord of the Age.[13] Even though this is a seventeenth-century work, it seems reasonable to accept this information as authentic, since it is the sort of thing that later writers, living at a time of increased Shi'ite orthodoxy, might have more likely suppressed than invented. Isma'il's own poetry gives further evidence for this belief, in so far as he wrote, 'the heroic ghazis have come forth with crowns of happiness on their heads. The Mahdi's era has begun. The light of eternal life has dawned upon the world' and goes on to represent himself as a 'return' of the sixth and the eighth Imams (since he also said that in his person 'God has come', merely being the return of two of the Imams was no great difficulty). 'Return' (*raj'at*) is a specifically Shi'ite doctrine that is not identical to reincarnation since, in Neoplatonic fashion, what returns is not the soul but the Idea of the holy figure. (This Neoplatonic framework helps explain why one individual could simultaneously be the 'return' of a number of holy figures of the past, embodying in himself more than one Platonic Form.)

The Shi'ite Sufi tribespeople of the early Safavid period adopted a highly pessimistic view of the Ottoman and the White Sheep Sunni states that ruled eastern Anatolia and the western Iranian plateau. They despised Sunnis generally as vicious betrayers of the rights of the Prophet's own family, and initiated what can only be called pogroms against members of this branch of Islam (who had constituted the vast majority of Iranians before 1500). Shi'ism gradually supplanted Sunnism in Iran. The utopia of the Türkmen was the theocratic state they erected, with their God-Pir as its ruler. It seems to me that the Safavid revolution has enough of the five elements of millennialism to have a 'family resemblance' to the phenomenon. Their praxis was tribal

warfare, seeking first a jihad state in the Caucasus where they sought to subdue Georgians and others, and then embarking on the conquest of Iran, on which Isma'il imposed a high bureaucracy headed by Türkmen officials and staffed by Persian scribes taken over from pre-Safavid states. And so it was that some key elements of modern Iranian identity – Shi'ite Islam and a unified state ruling the entire Iranian plateau and its peripheries – derived from the advent of the Türkmen 'millennium' at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In subsequent generations these embarrassingly heterodox origins of Iranian Shi'ism (which came in its more sober forms to predominate as the chief religion on the plateau) were downplayed. The God-Pirs were reduced to mere shahs, Sufi worship of them was discouraged, expectations of the end of the world declined, and in the end the Türkmen cavalry was shunted aside in favour of a standing army of slave soldiers from the marches of Georgia. Esoteric Shi'ism was replaced among urban elites by the bookish, learned Shi'ism that had developed earlier in Baghdad and Damascus. The state became an ordinary bureaucratic enterprise, a process helped along by major defeats by Ottoman artillery (e.g. Chaldiran in 1514) and at the hands of the Uzbek cavalries in the east. The Safavid empire emerged as an early modern rentier state dependent for its revenues largely on silk.

The millennialist strain in Shi'ism was so strong that it hardly went away even at the height of later Safavid routinization. In his 'Treatise on the Return' (*Risalih-i Raj'at*) of *c.* 1679 a middle-aged Mulla Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (1638–99), the Shaykhu'l-Islam of imperial Isfahan, dealt with the sayings of the Imams about the last days in two ways. First, he projected some of these events into Iran's past and employed them to support Safavid legitimacy. Second, he projected the end-time into the next century. He quotes a saying attributed to an early Imam from Shaykh Nu'mani's *Book of the Occultation* (*Kitab al-Ghaybah*) that says in part, 'When the Promised One (Qa'im) arises in Khurasan and conquers the land of Kofan and Multan … and from us a promised one (qa'im) arises in Gilan … then shall Basrah be destroyed and the commander of the Cause arise, and we shall relate a long tale.' Then he said, 'When thousands have been armed and the troops mustered in serried ranks and the ram has been slaughtered, there shall arise the last one and instigate a revolution that will destroy the unbeliever, and then the hoped-for Qa'im and the Hidden Imam – nobility and grace be his – will arise, and he is of my progeny O Husayn.'[14] Majlisi identifies the one who goes forth (*khuruj*) from Khurasan as the Mongols, and the qa'im of Gilan as Shah Isma'il Safavi. Majlisi sees other elements in the saying to refer to later Safavid monarchs such as Shah Safi.[15] This prophetic motif with its implicit support of the Safavids (and even its extraordinary acknowledgement of the validity of the claims by Isma'il and his followers that he was a messianic harbinger of the

return of the Twelfth Imam) does not lead him, however, to downplay millennialist hopes for the near future. He argues that the unconnected letters that appear mysteriously at the beginning of some chapters of the Qur'an contain dates that predict the rising of Husayn and the appearance of the Imam Mahdi, and concludes: 'The unconnected letters give 1155 (*circa* AD 1742) as the date of the Mahdi's appearance, 65 [lunar] years from this writing. But in fact the exact date cannot be accurately predicted. There are other sayings; and then, God may change his mind.'[16] Majlisi envisages a 'return' of Imams 'Ali and Husayn together, such that they will right the wrongs of their previous lives, and will jointly prevail over the Umayyads this time. The End Time will be an era in which the tragic scripts of Shi'ite history will be rewritten as 'comedies' (in the technical sense of narratives that integrate characters into society and in which they achieve their goals). Majlisi's views were not so much millennialist as pre-millennial. They contained many of the essential five elements, but lacked any immediacy and any focus on an actual charismatic leader. In this respect, Majlisi II was perhaps only a typical Shi'ite, in so far as that branch of Islam is characterized by the cultural production and reproduction of chiliastic anxiety and expectation, on which leaders could capitalize.

The eighteenth century wrought disaster upon Iran, with its invasion by Afghan pastoralists who overthrew the Safavid dynasty in 1722 and who de-urbanized the plateau with their raids and looting, setting in train a decades-long period of political instability and economic turgidity. Although there was something almost apocalyptic about this turmoil, and although we know that millennialist ideas continued to exist among some Iranians, no major millennialist movement arose during the period of turmoil and weak states. Smith has suggested that this lack of a great millennialist movement in the disastrous eighteenth century may be explained by the very harshness of the conditions, which left people with no hope whatsoever.[17] It might also be pointed out that the pastoralists' disruption of trade and urban life made it far less likely that a sedentary movement could mobilize substantial resources in this period. Majlisi's kind of pre-millennialism was probably widespread, but his date was pushed back, as 1742 yielded only further destructive campaigns by the adventurer Nadir Shah, whose 'world empire', including Iran, was really better conceived as a vast Central and South Asian target for raiding and looting by the 'monarch' and his tribal cavalries.

A different sort of pre-millennialism arose in the late eighteenth century, which came to be known as Shaykhism.[18] I bring the movement up in this regard with some caution, because although it has tended to be painted as having strong millennialist tendencies, I do not believe that the founder, Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i (1753–1826), was particularly preoccupied with such matters,

at least any more than a mainstream figure such as Majlisi II had been. His voluminous writings are mainly on issues of metaphysics, Shi'ite mysticism, and cosmic symbolism. Shaykh Ahmad's one extended discussion of the Mahdi involves the refutation of the claims of a contemporary to messianic status, and he appears to put off the possibility of such an advent into the succeeding century, just as had Majlisi II. Al-Ahsa'i explains that, in 1791, Shaykh Musa al-Bahrani wrote to him from Kazimain mentioning that a person had come to him saying, 'I am the representative (*wakil*) of the Lord of the Age.' This man alleged that he had visited many fabulous sites associated with the Shi'ite promised one – the Verdant Isle, the White Sea, the Darknesses, Jerusalem, Medina, Mecca, and 'hidden' lands as big as the province of Baghdad dotted with many villages. Therein, the representative reported, is a mosque where they 'went to perform the Friday congregational prayers with the Qa'im'. He prayed with them. His son, he averred, is ruler of those lands, where the people's work is to guide the erring, and to aid the Qa'im and the believers. The 'representative' lived in this fabulous land for nine years, until the Qa'im sent him back to tell others of it. Bahrani sought Shaykh Ahmad's advice about this claimant, whom he admitted led a pious and ascetic life, noting that the people were divided about whether to believe him or brand him a liar.

Al-Ahsa'i replied forcefully that the man's followers had been deluded by their base passions, which had fooled their intellects into mistaking the bad for the good. As for his advent, Shaykh Ahmad cites a saying attributed to the Sixth Imam, Ja'far as-Sadiq, that appears to speak of the Mahdi coming, disappearing and coming again: 'He shall vanish on the last day of the year 1266 [AH; i.e. 5 November 1850], and no eye shall behold him until all behold him.' This saying may be the basis on which many Shi'ites of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries believed the Qa'im would arise in 1260/1844, and it seems plausible from this text that Shaykh Ahmad, writing in 1791, agreed. His letter gives evidence that millennialist claims were being put forward in the 1790s, and also that these were largely unsuccessful, attracting no great following and earning only the ridicule even of mystics like al-Ahsa'i.

As the Muslim year 1260 AH (CE 1844) approached, the thousandth anniversary of the Occultation of the Imam, there was widespread millennialist speculation about his advent. Even in Lucknow in India, where the Shi'ite-ruled post-Mughal successor state of Awadh had emerged with its many connections to Iran, an Englishwoman who had married an Indian Shi'ite reported in a book published in the early 1830s that many North Indian Shi'ites believed that the Twelfth Imam would return in 1260 AH (1844). They pointed to a prophetic passage in Majlisi II's biography of the Prophet which said that 'When the four quarters of the globe contain Christian

inhabitants, and when the Christians approach the confines of the Kaabah, then may men look for that Emaum [Imam] who is to come.' Then, they thought, Jesus would descend from heaven to Mecca, there would be a bloody Armageddon, and finally a world with only one religion would emerge, with perfect peace and happiness throughout the world. She reports: 'I have heard them declare it as their firm belief that the time was fast approaching when there should be but one mind amongst all men. "There is but a little more to finish"; "The time draws near…"'[19] At that point, Shi'ite millennialists emphasized those elements in the sayings of the imams that supported anxiety about European colonialism in Muslim lands, provoked by the British conquest of India and subduing of Muslim-ruled states like the nawabate of Bengal, as well as increasing British naval dominance of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, which certainly looked like an approach to the Muslim kaaba (the cube-shaped shrine which Muslims circumambulate during pilgrimage). But when Majlisi himself engaged in millennialist speculations he had emphasized the Mongols and Safavids, not mentioning Europeans as such. Nineteenth-century Shi'ites also saw the Christian Greek revolution against the Muslim Ottoman empire as a sign that the last days were approaching. That such anxieties arose among Shi'ites in British-ruled India is unremarkable. What Mrs Mir Hasan 'Ali's report demonstrates, however, is that by the 1820s such millennialist expectations were widespread in the Shi'ite community. Thus, it is not only members of the Shaykhi school who had increasingly chiliastic expectations in the late 1830s, but a wide range of Shi'ites throughout Iran and even in India.

Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i was succeeded by Sayyid Kazim Rashti, who saw his predecessor as the initiator of a new cycle in sacred history. Upon Rashti's death on about 1 January 1844, the Shaykhi school split into several factions. Conservative Shaykhis gradually coalesced around Haji Muhammad Karim Khan Kirmani, a Qajar noble and large landholder.[20] A more progressive Shaykhi tradition, with fewer sectarian or cult-like attributes, gradually grew up in Tabriz, and Tabrizi Shaykhis ultimately played a role in supporting the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–11. A third group consisted of those Shaykhis convinced that the advent of the Imam or his representative was now nigh (1260 began 22 January 1844).[21] Ultimately these millennialist Shaykhis gathered around Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad Shirazi, a twenty-five-year-old member of the Afnan merchant clan of Shiraz and Yazd who had studied briefly with Rashti in the shrine cities and who put forth some sort of claim to be a representative (Bab or door) of the Twelfth Imam in spring–summer 1844. Gradually he let it be known that he was no mere representative, but was the return of the Imam himself. By 1848 he had gone further, beyond imamate to assertions that he was a messenger or 'manifestation' of God on

a par with Jesus and Muhammad, and he wrote out his own book of laws, the Bayan, which was to supersede the Qur'an. The Bab's message spread quickly through Iran and Iraq, attracting urban artisans, merchants and younger or less prominent clergymen in particular, along with some peasants (but very few pastoral nomads, some one-third of the population).

Before the 1970s the little we knew of the Babi movement was still largely based on spadework done in the nineteenth century by pioneering researchers into Iranian millennialism such as E. G. Browne and Victor Rosen, though Soviet scholars like Ivanov had attempted a Marxist interpretation of it in the 1930s and the Baha'i leader Shoghi Effendi had in the same decade 'translated' and published in part an important but late chronicle of the movement by Nabil Zarandi (d. 1892). A string of dissertations, studies and books produced by academics during the past twenty years, however, has drawn back the veil considerably.[22] On the basis of this new work we can essay a few observations about Babism as a millennialist movement. First of all, it was certainly characterized by dualism and pessimism about the prevailing order. The Bab was extremely critical of what he saw as the religious laxity of the semi-feudal ruling classes and even of the bazaar, from whence most of his own support derived. Significantly, he attacked the imposition of extra-canonical taxes and imposts by the Qajar elite. He was suspicious of the motives of European merchants, and given his family's commercial ties to Bombay and Hong Kong he would have been well aware of the tendency for imperial conquest to follow in the wake of the European trading companies. He therefore restricted the Europeans to trading in only a few provinces of the country, preserving the rest for the indigenous merchants. Aware of the crucial importance of credit as a modern instrument of trade, he allowed the taking of interest on loans (not so much abolishing the de jure Muslim prohibition on interest as regularizing the widespread de facto practice of the Muslim merchants in taking interest on loans anyway). This pessimism is also clear in the earliest extended Babi treatises by someone other than the Bab that now survive, the theological prolegomenon to the *Point of Kashan* (*Kitab-i Nuqtat al-Kaf*), written by Haji Mirza Jani Kashani. (The chronicle of the Babi movement that Kashani later appended to this treatise was extensively redacted and added to by subsequent authors and seems no longer to survive in its original 1851 form, but there is every reason to believe that the theological treatise at the beginning of this work goes back to about 1848.)[23] Kashani complained bitterly about the division of the originally united Shi'ite community into many contending sects, and this religious strife, disagreement and disunity appeared to him as among the worst features of the pre-millennial world:

the people during the most great Occultation have not acted in accordance with the mandate of the Qa'im – peace be upon him – and for this reason, differences over the religion have arisen. With regard to both the essential principles of religion and secondary matters they have divided into several sects. With regard to the principles of religion, they separated into four sects: philosophers, mystics, Shaykhis and mainstream Shi'ites. With regard to secondary matters [of religious law], also, they have divided into four sects: Akhbaris, Usulis, legalists, and Illuminationists. These eight sects have general principles in common, but on every specific principle they are subdivided into several further sects. Since we are on the brink of almost pure contention, it has become necessary that the government of God appear, as [the Prophet] said, 'The earth shall be filled with justice and equity' when the Cause of the Truth appears, for it is the one Cause of God, 'after it was filled with tyranny and oppression'.[24]

Disagreement, contention and disunity, then, are signs of the decadence of the old religious order and of the near appearance of the promised one.

Prophecy played an extremely significant role in the Bab's movement. We have already seen that a new interpretation of the Shi'ite traditions had grown up pointing to an advent in 1844, coupled with anxiety about Christian European colonial conquests in the Muslim world. Babis continued even after 1844 to refer back to the vast Shi'ite corpus of oral sayings attributed to the imams. The prediction that the Mahdi's black flag would be raised in Khurasan, which was more than a millennium old and was used by those who made the Abbasid revolution of the mid-eighth century, was resurrected by Babis based in Mashhad who were upset by the Bab's imprisonment by the Qajar state, and who set out in 1848 to rescue him, prominently waving black banners as they proceeded from Khurasan. The re-establishment of contact with the Twelfth Imam, either through a Bab or through a person who was his mystical Return, was an event that in folk Islam pointed to the near advent of the end of time. Among the prophetic criteria for the one who lays claim to a cause from God, according to Haji Mirza Jani Kashani, is that he should have been prophesied by holy figures of the past, and that when he ordains a new religious law, he be the first to implement it. He admits, however, that 'some prophecies about his advent have an esoteric, inner meaning' and that others 'are annulled by a change of the divine mind', while still others, 'though they are outwardly visible, only become manifest gradually, over the duration of the dispensation from its beginning to its end'.[25] Clearly, such a subtle and flexible approach to the interpretation of prophecy, which even allows for abrogation of some predictions on the grounds of a change in the divine mind (called *bada'* in Shi'ite theology), could be used to justify almost anything that occurred in the course of the Babi movement.

Shirazi himself provided the charismatic leadership for the movement, though the force of his unusual and very attractive personality could be projected in a direct way only briefly and to a limited number of followers in Shiraz 1844–46, then for a while in Isfahan, before he was transferred to remote fortresses in the northwest of the country. Most ordinary Babis could not read the Bab's complex Arabic treatises, written in the style of Arabic associated with Shi'ite esotericism and 'extremist' theology. His better-known Persian works, such as the *Book of Justice* and the *Seven Proofs*, were not written and distributed till his movement was well under way. Thus, the charisma of his major disciples, a second layer of leadership, was probably nearly as important as his own ability to persuade and attract. Mulla Husayn Bushru'i, the young Shaykhi cleric from Khurasan, Fatimih 'Tahirih Qurrat al-'Ayn' Baraghani of Qazvin, the Bab's fiery female disciple who was an accomplished theologian and poet; 'Ali 'Quddus' Barfarushi of Mazandaran, a very young ecstatic mystic; and Hujjat Zanjani, a rebellious cleric of the northern town of Zanjan, were among the more important of these. The significance of younger people, male and female, from prominent clerical families, seems obvious in this layer of discipleship, though the behind-the-scenes role of merchants in subventing and artisans in supporting the activities of the young scholars should not be forgotten. Tahirih Qurrat al-'Ayn was among the most forceful proponents at the 1848 conference of Badasht for abolishing the Muslim *shari'ah*, a motion that carried the day after much bitter wrangling and even, allegedly, the suicide of a conservative Babi who could not accept Tahirih's unveiling.[26]

The Babi movement was certainly messianic. In its first phases the followers of Shirazi probably hoped that the Imam himself would return soon. When Shirazi began publicly asserting that he was the Imam, the Babis' expectations turned to other figures. Shirazi himself spoke of 'He whom God shall make manifest', a future manifestation of God. With the Bab's execution in 1850, Babis hoped for the return of Imam Husayn or of Jesus. Indeed, by the late 1840s it was an article of faith that revelation was progressive and every messenger of God foretold a successor: 'Another sign is that one who lays claim to a Cause from God should prophesy about his successor and should command the people to obey, love and efface themselves in him; for there is no pause or cessation in the grace and manifestation of God.'[27] Expectation of an immediate and tangible messiah almost became institutionalized in Babism. While the Bab was alive, the Babis were not exactly theocrats in the sense that Geneva Calvinists were. The Bab addressed letters to Muhammad Shah, then monarch of Iran, and hoped he and other contemporary rulers would accept the new religion. After 1848, the Babi utopia appears to have been one wherein the king had accepted the Bab's spiritual counsel and

implemented the laws of the Bayan. Non-canonical taxes would be abolished, merchants would be free to pursue modern techniques requiring bank interest and to operate in many provinces without competition from European merchants, and the position of women might be slightly improved, with somewhat bigger inheritance shares and a bit more freedom of movement. Muhammad 'Ali 'Quddus' Barfarushi, a major young Babi leader, is said by a later Baha'i historian to have written a letter from his encampment at Shaykh Tabarsi in 1848 or early 1849, saying: 'We are exceedingly adverse to enmity and discord, much more to actual strife and warfare, especially with His Majesty the King. Only those who dream of lordship and dominion deliberately seek war with established authority.'[28]

Babi praxis was various. Most converts to Babism probably changed their daily lives very little. Many practised pious dissimulation, hiding their new faith. In 1844–48, very little in the Bab's teachings would have changed Babi practices much from their Shi'ite form. It is unlikely that his elaborate book of laws, the Bayan (1848), most of the provisions of which were impractical or idiosyncratic, could be copied quickly and securely enough to become very widely available to Babis before the Bab's execution or that even those who managed to secure a copy could hope to implement many of its ordinances. Some Babis manifested their new faith by becoming hyper-observant of the smallest Shi'ite regulations, whereas others took the Bab's advent as a justification for antinomianism and the abolition of religious restrictions altogether. (In disregard of the Bayan, many Babis took up the drinking of wine, or newly justified an old drinking habit.) Only occasionally did Babis take an activist stance. Even a number of those that later historiography has designated as 'Letters of the Living' or formal disciples appear to have simply lived out their lives in relative obscurity.

In a few cases, however, Babi praxis turned violent. The band that set out from Mashhad to rescue the Bab in 1848 moved into Mazandaran and there had a contretemps with a local Muslim community. As a result, they were forced to camp at the Shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi, and over time made it into a fort, being surrounded by hostile anti-adventist Shi'ites. Ultimately government troops were dispatched from Tehran for a long siege that ended with the defeat and massacre of the Babis, the survivors being sold into slavery. Conflicts also occurred in the city of Yazd and the two small towns of Zanjan (near Qazvin) in the north and Nayriz (near Shiraz) in the south.[29] In each of the small towns, a prominent cleric became a Babi, bringing along with him his followers and even his entire city quarter. Since city quarters in Qajar Iran often engaged in faction fighting, with youth gangs and turf wars, the unacceptability of Babism to conservative Shi'ite leaders in the other quarters, and the enthusiasm of the new converts in their own, led to violence. This

intra-urban violence then became so great as to alarm the state, which sent in troops on the side of the conservatives. In all cases the Babi factional violence led to a siege and ultimately to the conquest and sacking of the quarter, the killing of many males, and the enslavement of the survivors. The Babis do not appear initially to have planned anything like a national revolt or rebellion, though once the uprising was in full swing in Zanjan the Babis seem to have become dedicated revolutionaries, and they minted coins in the name of the Lord of the Age. The Bab himself did acknowledge holy war as a principle in his religion, but he never appears to have proclaimed it. Babi violence is more usefully seen as local and as part of a larger tendency to faction fighting in Qajar urban quarters than as a millennialist uprising. The possible exception here is the band of 400 seminarians and artisans who set out from Mashhad in 1848. If this small force did indeed have revolutionary aspirations, they were obviously wholly unrealistic. Nevertheless, that the Babi movement spread so quickly to every city and some villages of the Qajar empire, and that violence simultaneously broke out in several parts of the country (Mazandaran, Qazvin and Shiraz provinces), allowed the Babi revolts to become the first Iran-wide urban revolts of the modern era.

Something closer to a planned revolt occurred in 1852. It was plotted jointly by Shaykh 'Ali 'Azim Turshizi, then the most widely recognized successor to the Bab in Tehran and Mirza Yahya Nuri (Subh-i Azal), a fiery young nobleman from Mazandaran and son of Mirza Buzurg Nuri, the former governor of Burujird and Luristan. The plot involved the assassination of Nasir al-Din Shah and a coordinated uprising in the Nur district near the capital, in which the Babis of Takur took up arms. The assassination plot went awry when the assassins hit with grapeshot but failed to kill their royal target, and the Qajar army crushed the uprising in Takur, nearly razing it and putting it under martial law and surveillance for the rest of the century.[30] Although the revolt in Nur was if anything strategically more important than the ones in Shaykh Tabarsi, Nayriz and Zanjan, it has been suppressed in subsequent Babi-Baha'i historiography in part because its goal of regicide and perhaps its utter failure reflected badly on the Nuri family, which produced the two major successors to the Bab, Azal (who led the revolt) and his older brother Mirza Husayn 'Ali 'Baha'u'llah' Nuri (who opposed the revolt but was ignored).

Once the Bab was executed, many Babis appear to have become radicalized and the 1852 revolt suggests that some even contemplated attempting to take over the government and establishing a theocratic republic, since they attempted to assassinate the shah and to stage an uprising in Mazandaran without having any obvious successor to the throne in mind. Adas insists that millennialist revolts are not centrally about social class, being mass movements

and involving all sorts of people from various walks of life, and Walbridge has also noted that he could not find clear evidence of specifically class conflict during the Babi revolt in Zanjan. Still, it seems to me also the case that many Babis of the urban middle and lower middle strata detested the Qajar high administrators, governors, big landlords and high clergy, in part on class grounds. In return the Qajars viewed the Babis as rabble. The assassination plot and the Nur uprising were the Babis' undoing, since the slightly wounded but extremely outraged Nasir al-Din Shah instituted a vast nation-wide pogrom against Babis and suspected Babis. MacEoin estimated that between 1848 and 1855 or so some 5,000 Babis perished. The rest mostly went underground or forsook the new religion to return to a safer Shi'ism. Later on, in the early twentieth century the few remaining Babis were among the most vociferous proponents of the Constitutional Revolution.

The Babi movement probably affected less than 5 per cent of the then 6 million strong Iranian population, with adherents having constituted 1 per cent to 1.5 per cent at the height of the movement, and enemies and those directly affected by the revolts or pogroms making up the rest. The primary social base of the religion in the urban middle and lower middle strata made it extremely unlikely that it would succeed in gaining real power, because in the mid-nineteenth century military power still primarily rested with pastoralists and high state officers. The state still lacked much in the way of a modern, standing army trained by drill, though it did possess some imported state of the art weaponry and most importantly artillery; it lacked railroads or telegraph. Had any significant number of tribal groups joined, the movement could have had a chance of taking over the country (as the pastoralist Qajars had in the 1780s and 1790s only a few decades earlier, and as had the somewhat millennialist and highly heterodox Safavids 350 years earlier), and it might have had similar temporal success if it had become the religion of the Qajar officer class. As it was, the most the Babis in their small towns and city quarters could have hoped for was to remain locally influential and for the government to treat them even-handedly. But events like the faction fighting in Zanjan, which disrupted the caravan trade between Tehran and Tabriz (Iran's biggest and most important commercial city from which goods flowed to Istanbul and thence to Europe) made it imperative for the government to intervene.[31] And the by now established alliance of the Qajars with the Shi'ite clergy of the rationalist Usuli school led them to side with the latter against heretic 'rabble'.

The next significant millennialist movement in Iran, the Baha'i faith, grew out of a defeated and disconsolate Babism and centred on the person of Mirza Husayn 'Ali Nuri, Baha'u'llah ('the Glory of God'), who proclaimed himself the promised one of the Bab in Baghdad in 1863, and who in fact

initially represented himself as the mystical 'Return' of the Bab himself.[32] Baha'u'llah was thereafter exiled to Istanbul (autumn 1863), Edirne (winter 1863 to summer 1868) and Akka on the coast of Ottoman Syria (1868–92). The remaining Babis went over to Baha'u'llah very quickly in the late 1860s and through the 1870s, leaving the more militant Azali Babis who remained loyal to Mirza Yahya Subh-i Azal a small minority. Like Babism, for most of its history the Baha'i movement probably directly affected less than 5 per cent of the Iranian population, with adherents seldom more than 1 or 2 per cent (a possible exception is the late teens and early 1920s, when adherents and sympathizers are said by some academics to have amounted to a million persons in a population of around 13–15 million; but the numbers declined dramatically thereafter). In many ways, the Baha'i faith reversed the more salient features of Babism. It was what Smith has called a 'promulgatory' millennialism, in which adherents were simply to proclaim the message rather than take any particular action, and the first thing Baha'u'llah did on making his declaration was to abrogate the law of *jihad* or holy war. He was relatively successful in imbuing the Babis with a new ethos, which is demonstrated by the low incidence of faction fighting between his adherents and the Shi'ites in the last third of the nineteenth century.

Baha'u'llah's pessimism was the pessimism of a liberal about a reactionary society. He attacked absolute monarchy; arbitrary government; over-taxation (especially of peasants and the poor); militarism; nationalist chauvinism; religious dogmatism, exclusivism and repression; and extreme forms of patri-archal domination of women. He was speaking to the political and social realities of the Ottoman and Qajar empires. This absolutist, intolerant and patriarchal old world order was 'lamentably defective' and about to be 'rolled up'. Baha'u'llah's writings are suffused with apocalyptic expectation and anxiety, though much of it is extremely vague. Sometimes he is more specific, as when he warns: 'If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation … the day is approaching when its flame will devour the cities.'[33] Often his followers were less vague. Among the greatest Baha'i theologians, Mirza Abu al-Fadl Gulpaygani (d. 1914) told one interlocutor that he expected 'the Europeans to be completely annihilated' in accordance with 2 Peter, which promises swift perdition to any people among whom false teachers emerge (he probably meant to condemn atheists and Darwinists).[34]

Baha'u'llah represents himself as the somewhat unwilling and hapless recipient of divine revelation and of a mission from God. He is a 'mani-festation of God', the next stage in the evolution of the Prophet, on a par with (indeed, in some sense the 'return' of) Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, and the inaugurator of a new cycle in human history to be characterized

ultimately by peace and harmony and unity on a global scale. In his 1873 *al-Kitab al-Aqdas* he abrogates both the Qur'an and the Bayan, saying that the divine will has revealed a new book of laws for humankind. He de-emphasizes the messianic motif that had been so strong in Babism by proclaiming, right from 1863, that no further messengers of God would appear for at least a thousand years.

The Baha'i utopia changed a good deal over time, though it retained some key values. Baha'u'llah dreamed of a world in which loyalty to the entire globe and solicitude for the whole human race replaced various ethnic and nationalist hatreds, in which all spoke a common language; in which all either belonged to a single religion or at least acknowledged the unity and validity of the great world religions; in which armies were small and mainly served as border guards; in which collective security made war difficult or at least short and dangerous for the aggressor; in which religion and philosophy (including what we would call science) were handmaids of one another; in which the worst traits of modern, urban, industrial civilization – such as ever more powerful weaponry, costly wars that burdened the poor with high taxes, and perhaps forms of pollution – were eliminated. He spoke of the people's rights (*huquq*), and his son and successor, 'Abdu'l-Baha (1844–1921) praised the eighteenth-century achievement of freedom of conscience, religion and speech in the West.

Baha'i praxis was quietist, in which the old Babi scimitar was traded for wise and persuasive 'utterance' (*bayan*). Like all good liberals, the Baha'is were to depend primarily upon convincing their interlocutors with their words. This turn is referred to as quietist primarily in contrast with Babi militancy. It should be remembered that much in the Baha'i 'utterance', including praise for parliamentary democracy and denunciation of absolutism, was still radical in a Middle Eastern context. Baha'is were instructed to establish in each locality a body of nine trustworthy members to serve on the 'house of justice', which served as a steering committee for the community. Care for the poor, especially of the community, appears to have been a major preoccupation of the early steering committees, which tended actually to be called 'spiritual assemblies' rather than houses of justice.

Baha'u'llah foresaw the abolition of absolute monarchy in favour of constitutional monarchies and (less desirably from his point of view) republics, where elected parliaments would legislate and the rights of the people would be upheld. Baha'u'llah himself does not seem to me to forbid his followers from attempting to gain this objective by speaking for it, but he certainly does prohibit revolutionary or seditious activity. Later Baha'i leaders forbade even speech aimed at changing the political status quo, effectively leaving Iranian Baha'is no choice but simply to wait till a parliament dropped miraculously

into their laps. Finally, Baha'u'llah foresaw a world in which religious leaders and institutions absented themselves from the governmental sphere, leaving politics to civil politicians. Although his separation of religion and state drew the lines differently than was common in the West (he still imagined the state administering some religious personal status law), he did erect a wall between the two spheres as a way of ruling out of the question any form of theocracy, the old unrealized Shi'ite ideal and perhaps that of some Babis. Ironically, desire for theocracy was so great among Iranian Baha'is and their eventual Western co-religionists that ultimately the conservatives among them managed to resurrect this notion, dreaming of a world ruled by their houses of justice, in direct contradiction to Baha'u'llah's own vision.

The make-up of the Baha'i community was urban and predominantly from the middle strata. The three major groups in the period 1866–92, each with between a fifth and a quarter of the total, were merchants, skilled urban workmen and younger or less prominent members of the Shi'ite clergy; 10 per cent were government workers.[35] Women also played a key role. Political power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was shifting towards these sorts of groups and away from the pastoral nomads (by 1900 only a quarter of the population), and coalitions of merchants, artisans and 'ulama, along with a modern intellectual class, successfully mounted movements such as the Tobacco Revolt and the Constitutional Revolution. Because of the precarious position of Baha'is as heretics from the point of view of the Shi'ite conservatives, however, they tended to be excluded from such coalitions unless they dissimulated, and their own ambivalence about direct political action and their millennialist expectations of sudden and miraculous change, tended to make them more passive than many in their social classes as the twentieth century wore on.

The Baha'i faith was the last great millennialist movement in modern Iran that manifested all five of the major motifs identified above and which appealed directly to apocalyptic rhetoric for the purposes of theodicy. The Tobacco Revolt protesting the shah's granting of a monopoly in the marketing of Iranian tobacco in 1890–92 to a British entrepreneur played out again the pattern of loosely coordinated urban revolts seen earlier in the Babi movement. But this time the telegraph was used by merchants and Shi'ite clergymen to achieve an immediate political goal for rational economic purposes, the re-vocation of the monopoly and the forestalling of massive British intervention in Iranian society and the economy. There were millennialists who saw these events to have greater cosmological significance, but the core of the movement was this-worldly and practical. No transcendent or even temporal trans-formation was dreamt of, only a return to the status quo ante of 1889, and that was what was achieved.

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–11, likewise, was largely a pragmatic affair, with concrete political agitation for achievable goals. Begun over economic and anti-imperialist grievances in 1905, it took a new turn when its leaders (especially big merchants and modernist intellectuals) began demanding a parliament and constitution. Both were granted in the second half of 1906. The Azali Babi intellectuals, for whom the revolution was a confirmation of the Bab's cosmic role in reordering Iran along more populist lines, played an important role in promoting its ideals as publicists, journalists and preachers.[36] Even more mainstream Shi'ite intellectuals such as Nazim al-Islam Kirmani depicted the Constitutional Revolution and such 'signs' as new freedoms for women as harbingers of the end of time, citing sayings from the imams just as had Majlisi in the seventeenth century. He asserted that those who died for the constitution were Muslim martyrs, for it would endure until the coming of the Mahdi.[37] The Baha'i position was far more complex. By then the movement was led by Baha'u'llah's eldest son 'Abdu'l-Baha (1844–1921). He initially welcomed news of the Shah's willingness to call elections for parliament and to sign a constitution as millennial confirmation of Baha'u'llah's prophecies, saying to a correspondent:

> You wrote a glorious letter saying that the time has arrived, of the most great glad-tidings that a national parliament [*shura-yi milli*] has been established in Iran and that arrangements are being made for a constitutional government that is in accord with the divine Law, in conformity with the explicit command of the Most Holy Book. I read what you wrote about the joy and delight of the American intellectuals and scholars at this life-giving good news, as well as the rejoicing at the glorious embassy. This became a cause for great happiness. The constitutional government is, according to the unequivocal divine Text, sanctioned by the revealed Law, and it is a cause of the might and prosperity of the State, to which allegiance is owed, and of the progress and liberty of the respected citizenry.[38]

Once the constitution had been signed, 'Abdu'l-Baha urged Baha'is to attempt to elect some of their own religious leaders to the parliament.

One secret Baha'i, Shaykh al-Ra'is, was not only a speaker of parliament but the poet laureate of the Constitutional Revolution. In 1908 Muhammad 'Ali Shah made a royal absolutist coup against the parliament and constitution, executing many of their supporters, including a number of Azali journalists, and he had Shaykhu'r-Ra'is imprisoned briefly. 'Abdu'l-Baha at that point ordered the Baha'is to dissociate themselves from the constitutionalists and to return to political quietism, though his earlier pro-constitutionalist stance suggests that here he was pragmatically attempting to prevent pogroms against the small and exposed Baha'i community, already considered heretical, rather

than that he was instituting a principle of complete withdrawal from all 'political' affairs. The latter interpretation came to be put on his words, however, as the twentieth century unfolded. 'Abdu'l-Baha's charisma and liberal principles attracted enormous numbers of Iranians in the opening two decades of the twentieth century, from all accounts, and an internal Baha'i census is said to have returned one million Iranian adherents and sympathizers in the early 1920s. In contrast, the Azalis continued to decline in numbers and influence, easily melding into the world of secular politics and culture, usually taking a left of centre position. The Constitutional Revolution was the last time they played a significant role in Iranian history.

The subsequent reinstatement of the Iranian parliament in 1909 and its dismal performance as a weak and divided government open to foreign lobbying gradually undermined belief in parliamentary democracy among many Iranians. In 1925 Colonel Reza Pahlevi swept away the constitutional system, abolished the Qajar monarchy, crowned himself the first king of the new Pahlevi dynasty, and instituted an authoritarian–populist dictatorship in Iran that attacked liberals and leftists alike. Almost in tandem, the new leader of the Baha'i movement from 1921, Baha'u'llah's great-grandson Shoghi Effendi, moderated his predecessors' high opinion of parliamentary democracy and began speaking of 'the ineptitude of the parliamentary system of government as witnessed by recent developments in Europe and America',[39] as well as condemning the 'foul stench of the foreign parties and factions of the West' and forbidding membership in political parties in Iran, which were in his view 'originators of tumult and destroyers of the foundation of state and society'.[40] He briefly celebrated the hard-line secularist policies of Reza Shah in the late 1920s and early 1930s, rejoicing that the 'ignorant and tyrannical ulama' had been 'defeated and were despondent and scattered', and that 'this is what we were promised in the prophecies'.[41] The shah later turned on Baha'i institutions, as well, however. Shoghi Effendi forbade nominations and campaigning in Baha'i elections, transforming the spiritual assemblies into mysteriously elected soviets rather than the democratic bodies Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha envisaged, and he discouraged public criticism of their policies and decisions. He expanded a system of internal Baha'i censorship, and created a division of lay bishops he called 'Hands of the Cause for Protection' who monitored Baha'is for signs of too much independent thinking, and who could recommend that insufficiently obedient individuals be disfellowshipped or even shunned.

The increasingly regimented Baha'i communities of Iran under the unchallengeable sway of the newly undemocratic spiritual assemblies proved unattractive to most of the religion's members and former admirers, who voted with their feet and deserted it in their hundreds of thousands. By 1978

there were fewer than 100,000 registered Baha'is in Iran, with perhaps another 200,000 people of Baha'i background and close sympathizers. Even if the figure of one million adherents and sympathizers for the early 1920s is exaggerated, it seems clear that the history of the Baha'i millennialist religion in twentieth-century Iran has resembled a bell curve. As the religion forsook generally liberal ideals for illiberal ones, and as Iranians became more educated and politicized, the Baha'i faith was less and less attractive to them, more especially as its leaders deserted the founders' democratic commitments for a system that increasingly resembled nothing so much as a one-party system imposed on a community that otherwise valued peace, harmony, globalism and progress. Finally, Baha'u'llah's vision of a world full of parliamentary democracies (albeit many of them constitutional monarchies) at peace with one another, with religious organizations forbidden to interfere in affairs of state, was gradually replaced by late twentieth-century Baha'i leaders with a millennialist hope for a world in which the spiritual assemblies or houses of justice would supplant civil governance altogether and institute a global theocracy.[42]

Rinehart maintains that Iranian movements of the later twentieth century such as the Tudeh Communist Party and Khomeinism are forms of millennialism in which expectations of a sudden and miraculous transformation of the world have been replaced with practical, political action of a rationalized and bureaucratic sort.[43] I agree with him that Iranian communism demonstrates many millennialist features: the extreme (and as it turns out somewhat unwarranted) pessimism about capitalist society with its total condemnation of bourgeois institutions; its use of dialectical materialism to predict certain revolution when the conditions become ripe; its dream of a revolutionary, almost apocalyptic break with the past; its cult of personality around the party leaders and its exaltation of the party line to unchallengeable dogma; its cell organization and attempts to infiltrate the state, and its dream of an egalitarian utopia.[44] But it seems to me that it is a different matter to identify millennialist features in a modern political movement than to call such a movement millennialism without further qualification. I am sensitive to Fields's implicit critique of Hobsbawm for his stage-like theory of progression from 'pure' millennialism to 'modern' political action, with the former remaining 'archaic' and ineffectual. As we have seen in the instance of Shah Isma'il, pre-modern millennialism is not always ineffectual. It does seem to me useful, however, to make the distinction in every time and place between millennialist movements with the sort of motifs and rhetorical properties I have identified, and other sorts of movement that have only a partial resemblance to millennialism. Communists' attempts to know the future are a form of sociological speculation based on material cause and effect, unlike in their rhetorical form and premises

Hal Lindsey's or Pat Robertson's use of biblical texts to situate the present and the future in sacred time. Practical revolution is not precisely identical to supernatural apocalypse. The resemblance is there, but it is insufficiently strong to place twentieth-century communism precisely in the 'species' of millennialist movements.

Likewise, it would be my position that the Islamic Revolution of 1978–79 against the Pahlevi dictatorship had millennialist overtones but was not a millennialist movement.[45] The Khomeinists' pessimism about Pahlevi dictatorship, Iranian lopsided capitalism, and Western cultural forms and institutions was certainly total (though not everyone who opposed the shah and wanted change agreed with such a wholesale condemnation of the Iranian social forms of the day). Khomeini and his circle did not appeal explicitly to prophecy in order to bolster their claims, though some of their terms had what Amanat calls an apocalyptic overtone.[46] It is true that many Muslims believed that at the beginning of each Islamic history a renewer would arise, and some held that Khomeini was the renewer for 1400 AH.[47] But this is a rather weak sort of 'prophecy' that is not notably millennialist in form; some of the figures to whom the status of renewer was attributed included pillars of the Muslim establishment like Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi of seventeenth-century Mughal India. The Khomeinists may have expected a Mahdist revolution in some ways, but they primarily looked forward to a practical change in government, with clerics replacing the shah's techno-crats. Among the strongest similarities to millennialism is Khomeini's own charismatic leadership and the extraordinary authority he gained. Ultimately Khomeini's 'Islamic government' was seen as having the prerogative to set aside temporarily even basic elements of Islamic law. A certain millennialist aura was attributed to Khomeini by the ordinary folk, as Arjomand points out:

> An unmistakably apocalyptic mood was observable during the fateful month of Moharram 1399 [December 1978] among the masses in Tehran … Khomeini's face was allegedly seen on the moon in several cities, and those who had been privileged to see it proceeded to sacrifice lambs. Intense discussions were reported as to whether or not Khomeini was the Imam of the Age and the Lord of Time. Those who answered in the affirmative were undoubtedly among the millions who massed in the streets of Tehran to welcome the returning Ayatollah in February 1979, and whose frenzy was to be televised across the globe. But even many of those who answered in the negative were ready to accept Khomeini as the precursor of the Mahdi.[48]

Arjomand also notes that Muhammad Rayshahri, a revolutionary prosecutor, wrote a book in 1981 on *The Continuation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran until the Global Revolution of the Mahdi*, and notes, 'this belief bears striking

similarity to the claim that the Safavid rule would continue until the advent of the Hidden Imam'.[49] The Austrian anthropologist Reinhold Loeffler also found villagers who believed that the revolution had been predicted by the Fifth Imam, who 'wrote over one thousand years ago that in the year 1400, which is the current year, there would be an Islamic revolution in Iran, 80,000 people would be killed, and there would be unrest for six years until Iran became victorious'.[50] Another villager, however, dismissed Khomeini's claim to have come in order to 'prepare the way for the coming of the Last Imam'.[51]

Khomeini's own claims and rhetoric were in fact distinctly pragmatic. Although, he says, 'we are in the time of the Occultation of the Imam', and so legitimate political and religious authority is in some sense absent, it is necessary that government-related ordinances of Islam be implemented to avoid anarchy. It is the practical threat of anarchy that is given as the impetus for a search for some legitimacy for government below the level of the Hidden Imam. And there is a solution, in Khomeini's view. Just government depends on a ruler possessing knowledge of the revealed law and being upright (*'adil*). Since large numbers of Shi'ite clerics possess these attributes, 'if they would come together, they could establish a government of universal justice in the world'. In particular, a single individual who possesses these two traits in an exemplary way could establish a government and then 'he will possess the same authority as the Most Noble Messenger in the administration of society, and it will be the duty of all people to obey him'.[52] Yet this form of reasoning is not millennialist nor even particularly pre-millennialist. The Imam is absent. The Imam will someday return. The question is, what shall we do in the meantime? And the answer is that in the meantime the Shi'ite clerics shall rule, and moreover they are perfectly capable of ruling in a fashion that forestalls anarchy and implements routine justice until such time as the Imam reappears. He rejected the idea that the 'ulama could wage holy war in the Imam's absence, though he did look forward ultimately to an 'Islamic World Government' which would come into being with the advent of the Imam.[53] The implication seems to be, however, that his return is not all that urgent. Khomeini, like all Shi'ites, did believe in a return of the Twelfth Imam, but he demonstrates no millennialist impatience about it, and future messianism is a very weak element in his thought – whatever his followers thought in the heady days of the revolution. Nor is utopia a particularly millennialist affair for Khomeini. He foresaw a spread of Islam, especially of Shi'ism, to the peoples of the world, and famously (and bizarrely) had his eye on a geriatric and failing communist leadership in Russia as a potential source of converts. In this hope for a global Shi'ite theocracy he resembled his arch-enemies, those among the right-wing Baha'i leadership which also dreamed millennial

dreams of their religious institutions taking over the world. (Whether Baha'i and Shi'ite theocrats influenced one another is yet to be determined.) But it appears to have been more important to Khomeini in the short and medium term that clerics rule than that they be Shi'ite clerics, and he seemed to think a Latin America ruled by Catholic priests would be a perfectly good thing.[54] His praxis was to organize demonstrations from the mosques and engage in politics of an authoritarian-populist kind, outlawing, once he got the chance, other political parties and ideologies, and employing 'revolutionary guards' rather as Mussolini did brownshirts. There was nothing very millennialist about this way of proceeding.

Iranian millennialism challenges many of the stereotypes of such movements found in the literature. The first and most striking conclusion we may draw from this macro-historical survey is that religions in Iran have been extremely volatile and ever-changing along the spectrum that Lincoln posited, from religions of the establishment to religions of the oppressed, and from passive to active to revolutionary and back. Shah Isma'il and the Türkmen took a folk Twelver Shi'ism that functioned as the oppositional religion of Sufis and pastoralists and made it into the national religion of Iran that was, by the time of Majlisi II, a pillar of the establishment. And yet Imam Khomeini used its motifs for oppositional purposes and even made it revolutionary. Its main institutions and leaders are now settling once again into the role of supporters of the established order. The Babis began as passive millennialist oppositionists, until urban faction-fighting encouraged them to become activists, and in the end the way the state sided with their opponents helped turn them into revolutionaries. But Baha'u'llah took over the movement, reformed it, and made it passively oppositional and a vehicle for liberal and democratic ideas. By the later Pahlevi period, however, Shoghi Effendi's introduction of authoritarian and hierarchical governance techniques, his amoral insistence that Baha'is support all established governments, and the class location of most Baha'is in the middle and upper strata, had transformed the religion into a minor prop for the Pahlevi status quo, which is one reason the Khomeinists hate the Baha'is so much. Admittedly, right-wing Baha'i 'passive' hopes for a future Baha'i theocracy lend it a latent oppositional role, but such hopes are projected so far into the future as to almost entirely mute the opposition. If we compare the 1840s to the 1970s, then, we find an almost complete reversal. In the former decade Babi forebears of the Baha'is were revolutionary and the Shi'ite 'ulama supported the Qajar monarchy against them. In the latter the Baha'is were largely pro-establishment and Khomeinist 'ulama had become anti-monarchical republicans! Lincoln's suggestion that there are long-term, fixed religions of the establishment distinct from other movements that are religions of the

oppressed, must therefore be modified. At any one time, the centre of gravity of a religious movement may lie with the power elite or with the disprivileged, but this can change radically over time (and sometimes quite quickly). Religious ideologies are revealed as fluid and volatile, not as in some way fixed. In short, religious politics is still a kind of politics, with shifting alliances over time.

To the idea that millennialist ideas flourish mainly in non-metropolitan settings such as backwoods villages, and that adherents foolishly attempt to substitute magic for modern politics in expressing their grievances and seeking their goals, we can certainly reply that the Iranian cases do not fit such a characterization. Shah Isma'il successfully promulgated his millennialism among the Türkmen tribal cavalry, among the finest fighting men in the region, enabling him to overthrow the White Sheep tribal-feudalist state and to conquer Iran – during a period when pastoralists were the force in society most likely successfully to found a state, more especially when they could be united by some over-arching loyalty or religious ideology. Belief in magic and the supernatural, when coupled with expert pastoralist fighters, could bolster morale and lead to actual victory. (The defeat in 1514 at the hands of Ottoman artillery gunners shook the Türkmen faith in Isma'iliis and their own invulner-ability, but did not prevent the Safavid state from emerging.) While the goals and institutions of the Babis may have remained a bit vague or impractical, their command of the tactics of urban faction-fighting and their willingness to resort to political assassination (as the Nihilists did in Russia) made them formidable enemies of the state who were by no means easily suppressed. Baha'u'llah's millennialism posited pragmatic institutional mechanisms, such as parliamentary democracy, international collective security, and the con-sultative processes of the Baha'i 'spiritual assemblies', as mechanisms of political, cultural and religious reform. His adherents, although they included peasants, were primarily members of the urban middle strata and far from socially helpless.

It is not at all clear that the White Sheep or Qajar governments were less 'archaic' than their millennialist opponents. Indeed, Baha'u'llah's vision of global community, human unity and equality, and international collective security make a number of his contemporaries among Middle Eastern and European statesmen look rather savage. The millennialists who supported Imam Khomeini (many bazaaris or urban craftsmen, or slum dwellers recently arrived from the countryside) joined practical networks of revolutionary action coordinated from the mosques, engaged in street protests, and supported a status group (the 'ulama) who had the legitimacy and the popularity to take over the country through political revolution. They may have seen the Imam's face in the moon and yearned for the advent of the Hidden Imam, but they were not thereby paralysed from taking politically efficacious action. (In this

latter case, of course, it could be argued that the basic political techniques were promoted by non-millennialist political groups, but the point is that the millennialists did not hesitate to adopt them, as well.) Karen Fields suggests that millennialist protests in central Africa had a real effect on a British colonial state that joined religion and government in an almost medieval fashion, because in some way the Jehovah's Witnesses understood the state and the way they could have an impact on it.[55] In the same way, we can see that Iranian millennialists in a wide variety of times and settings frequently did make a significant impression on the state, because their millennialism addressed the realities of the political situation, in some cases quite successfully. And even where they failed, as with Babism, they were hardly inconsequential. I can concur wholeheartedly with Fields that it is hopeless and counter-productive to attempt to separate 'political' from 'culturally symbolic' action. Millennialism was cultural and political, symbolic and in its own way rational.

Nor has Iranian millennialism been particularly tied to issues in Western colonial domination. Indeed, the most millennialist of these movements, the Safavi and Babi, were least concerned with this issue, whereas the movement most focused on issues in neo-imperialism, the Khomeinist, was only marginally characterized by millennialist themes. I am unconvinced that 'disaster' or 'social crisis' provoked most of these movements. Societies are always in flux and social and material goods are always unequally distributed, so that I find disaster hard to operationalize, and I concur with resource mobilization theorists such as Charles Tilly that grievances you have always with you. It is true that the Türkmen were being displaced from eastern Anatolia by the Ottomans in the late fifteenth century, but they could just have wandered off in search of better pasturage elsewhere. The steppe is vast and pastoralists were not tied down or hemmed in by strong states to the east. The merchants and craftsmen of Iran may have been somewhat hurt by the competition of Western-manufactured goods and of Russian imports with low tariffs (imposed by the Treaty of Turkomanchai in 1828 after a major Iranian loss to the Russians in the Caucasus), but it is unclear that the impact of such factors was greater in the 1840s than in other decades. In the 1890s after the Tobacco Revolt the world collapse of silver prices badly hurt the silver-based Iranian currency, but there was no millennialist uprising then. And while there was high inflation in 1977–78 (partially as a result of the rise in petroleum prices) and economists have pointed to a number of economic discontents, including the shah's anti-corruption campaign against shopkeepers that blamed them for the price rises, it has long struck me that these discontents seem incommensurate with the magnitude of the revolution made, and that many other petroleum states experienced similar problems but no revolution.

Obviously, Shah Isma'il, the Bab, Baha'u'llah, and Khomeini all attest to the importance of charismatic leadership, as Adas argued. But as a social historian I am unhappy with a Great Man theory of millennialist movements. Movements tend to have leaders, and to throw up leaders where they start with none. Isma'il was only a fourteen-year-old child when he set out against Shirvan, and it seems likely to me that adult mentors were helping him 'lead'. The Bab was in prison for a good deal of his short ministry, and often inaccessible when he was not. Likewise, Baha'u'llah was in distant Edirne and Akka, and exerted his influence in Iran mainly through letters and couriers. Khomeini, though widely respected in the late 1970s, was in Paris and not taken seriously as a leader by the vast majority of politically aware Iranians, most of whom hoped for the emergence of a constitutional monarchy or a democratic, secular republic with a freedom for religion that might make the old man happy. Workers, teachers, students, leftist guerrillas and bazaaris were the main actors in the revolution, with the 'ulama playing a lesser supporting role until Khomeini came back in February 1979 and began the process of hijacking it.

I also believe that conflict among various social strata and conflict with at least one major faction in the power elite are generally key to these millennialist movements, even if the movements themselves end up being broadly based and drawing from a number of strata. Here I differ from Adas. Shah Isma'il's movement united Türkmen pastoralists with urban Sufi and Shi'ite religious networks, but this town–tribe alliance cut out the peasants, who were to be sheared like sheep, and worked to challenge or overthrow the major states in the area – Shirvan, White Sheep, Ottoman. The Bab's partisans were largely urban merchants, craftsmen, junior or low-ranking clergy, and a few peasants, and they had nothing but contempt for the Qajar state and the very large landowners who were its mainstay, nor had they any affinity with the tribal peoples and their leaders. This is not to say that no landlords adopted Babism (nor indeed that no members of the state bureaucracy did – the Nuris were only one such noble-administrative family who converted). But these few joiners often had their own conflicts with the Qajar state, and do not alter the balance of gravity within the movement. The Baha'is drew from the same urban middle and lower middle strata, but on the whole they forsook antipathy to the civil wing of the state, instead becoming moderate reformers, and channelling their hatred into a rather fierce anti-clericalism instead of an anti-shah feeling. Since the Shi'ite 'ulama or clergy staffed the Qajar judiciary and many of them received state stipends as notaries or prayer leaders, they could be seen as one wing of the state, and were certainly a wing that the Baha'is would like to have displaced (and which returned the hatred ten-fold). The Khomeinists despised the shah both because of his cultural
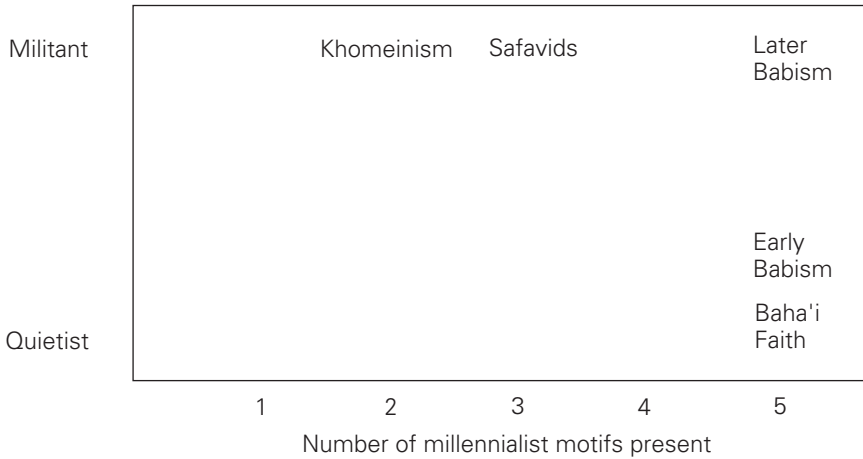
Figure 14.1 Millennialist movements in modern Iran

politics of Iranian nationalism (with its exaltation of the pre-Islamic, Zoro-astrian and Achaemenid heritage of Iran) and because of his complaisance towards Western political and cultural influence in the country. He had after all been put back on the throne in 1953 after a CIA counter-coup.

As is clear from my adoption of the Berger–Smith 'motif' approach and my acceptance of O'Leary's argument for millennialism as a rhetorical means of explaining the existence of evil, I believe that millennialism is a set of premises and rhetorical styles and conventions that can be adopted by very different sorts of actors on the stage of cultural politics and symbolic (and therefore practical) action. These premises and this rhetoric are not hurt by having an eloquent exponent or by a general feeling of discontent in the land. But neither disaster nor prophetic leadership is the absolute key here. A cultural tradition like Twelver Shi'ism that is deeply imbued with millennialist ideas seems to be especially important. There have been a few mahdis in modern Syro-Lebanese history. None of them has been nearly as important as their Iranian equivalents. And several of them arose among Shi'ites of one sort or another. The Twelver Shi'ite emphasis on the eventual return of the Imam, and Shi'ite discomfort with political authority in his absence gives millennialist leaders and their arguments a certain base of plausibility in large numbers of people.

15

The Middle East in Modern American Popular Prophetic Belief

Paul Boyer

For millions of Americans at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the prophetic and apocalyptic scriptures are not archaic texts from the dim past whose interpretation is to be left to divinity professors or hermeneutically-inclined literary scholars, but familiar, trusted guides to current events, as relevant to the present moment as this morning's newspaper. When the vast company of prophecy believers in the United States (and elsewhere in the world) learn from the media of AIDS epidemics in Africa, earthquakes in China, crisis in the global economy, deepening environmental hazards, the rise of the European Union, the spread of a world communications network, nuclear proliferation on the Indian subcontinent, or chemical and biological weapons laboratories run by hostile powers or shadowy cults, they filter this information through a complex web of end-time belief rooted in particular readings of prophetic and apocalyptic scriptures found in the Bible. These texts, they firmly believe, offer a detailed road map of events that will soon unfold as human history enters its final stages.

Prophecy believers bring this same perspective to their understanding of Jewish history, Islam and unfolding events in the Middle East. Indeed, these topics have long loomed large for prophecy interpreters and popularizers, and one cannot fully understand contemporary American attitudes on these sub-jects without close attention to the prophetic themes woven through the ongoing discussion of them. The first part of this chapter, then, will briefly summarize the most popular system of prophetic interpretation in con-temporary America; offer a cursory overview of some of the evidence for its pervasive importance; and review the particular understanding of the role of Jews, Muslims and the Middle East conflict in this belief system as it evolved from the Middle Ages onwards, and as it was popularized in post-Second World War America.[1] The final section addresses the subtle shifts of emphasis

in popular expositions of Bible prophecy that emerged after the end of the Cold War, again with particular reference to Israel, the Jews and Islam.

The observant reader will quickly note that my evidence comes mainly from what prophecy popularizers have written. Apart from some limited public-opinion data, I say little about the actual reception of these writings, and address only briefly the comparative intensity of prophecy belief across categories of gender, race, geography, education, social class and so forth. This, of course, underscores the intellectual historian's perennial dilemma: it is far easier to document the ideas that are pumped into the culture in print, electronic, or visual form than it is to trace their impact and reception.[2] Nevertheless, as I shall suggest, when we survey the vast sale of prophecy paperbacks and the ubiquity of prophecy preachers in the electronic media, we are justified, I think, in drawing certain inferences about the political and cultural influence of this material.

A final prefatory note. This chapter addresses only one part of the full spectrum of writings on the apocalyptic scriptures. Many scholarly and theological studies of this genre exist, as well as commentaries for the general reader that contain no allusions to current events, and inspirational books that treat the apocalyptic literature as allegories offering insights into the human condition and guidance for conducting one's life. My focus, however, has been on those works aimed at a popular audience that treat the biblical apocalypses as divinely inspired prophecies of future events and that link these texts to current social and political realities. Though only a part of the whole, this body of work is vast and, I believe, vastly influential.

The Continuing Resonance of Bible Prophecy Belief in Modern America

Millennialism is alive and well in contemporary America. As the year 2000 approached, Bible prophecy popularizers, televangelists and radio preachers filled the nation's bookstores, cable TV channels, Christian radio stations, and Internet websites with apocalyptic end-time prophecies rooted in biblical passages that they organized, interpreted and applied to current events with great ingenuity. By far the most influential millennial system in contemporary America is pre-millennial dispensationalism, first worked out by the British religious leader John Darby (1800–82), a founder of the Plymouth Brethren sect, and popularized in America by the Rev'd Cyrus Scofield (1845–1921) and countless others.

According to this interpretive scheme, documented at every point by an imposing array of Bible passages, sacred history is divided into a series of distinct epochs, or dispensations, in each of which God has offered (or will

offer) new means of grace to enable fallen humanity to achieve salvation. In Darby's dispensational system, we are presently living in the Church Age, when God has shifted his attention from his chosen people, the Jews, to the Gentiles, and salvation comes to those who accept Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the promised Messiah, as their personal saviour.

The next great event on the prophetic calendar, Darby taught, citing I Thessalonians 4: 16–18, will be the Rapture, when all true believers will be snatched from the earth to join Christ in the skies. No one knows the precise moment of the Rapture, but, as Jesus taught his disciples, one may know from the signs of the times – increasing wickedness, warfare and natural disasters, as well as the unfolding of events in Israel – that it is near. After the Rapture comes the Great Tribulation, a nightmarish seven-year interval when the Antichrist will arise and rule the earth. Antichrist will first present himself as a man of peace, but midway through the seven-year period he will reveal his demonic purposes, demanding absolute allegience to his dictatorial rule. Antichrist will persecute with murderous ferocity those 'Tribulation Saints' who turn to Christ after the Rapture, refusing to be branded with Antichrist's dread insignia, the Mark of the Beast, the number 666, mentioned in Revelation 13: 16–18.

As the Tribulation draws to an end, the final scenes of the drama, portrayed in the Book of Revelation, unfold: Antichrist's armies will gather on the Plains of Jezreel, near Har-Megiddo, or the hill of Megiddo (hence the Battle of Armageddon), near Haifa, and prepare to battle a vast army crossing the Euphrates from the east. At this moment, however, Jesus Christ, returning to earth as the avenging warrior-king with his raptured saints, will utterly destroy both armies and cast the Antichrist himself into a Lake of Fire. At last acknowledged as the Messiah, the divine ruler of the earth, Christ with his saints will establish in a rebuilt Jewish Temple at Jerusalem a kingdom that will last for 1,000 years (hence, the Millennium), bringing justice, peace and righteousness to the world at last.

At the end of the Millennium, Satan and his Antichrist forces will escape from the Lake of Fire, where they have endured 1,000 years of torment, for one last challenge to Christ. But this challenge will suffer its foreordained defeat, and at a solemn Last Judgment, all human beings who have ever lived will be judged and consigned to either heaven or hell. At this point, the cycle of human history ends and eternity begins, with evil vanquished and righteousness triumphant for ever and ever.[3]

This powerful eschatological drama, rooted in myths of cosmic struggles between good and evil, order and chaos, light and darkness, that arose in the earliest civilizations of the Middle East, has inspired some of the greatest art and music of Western culture. For millions of contemporary Americans,

however, this belief system is not of merely historical, aesthetic or allegorical interest. Systematized by Darby, Scofield and others as pre-millennial dispensationalism, and packaged by countless popularizers, it remains for many a matter of literal, firmly held belief. In a 1996 survey of religious attitudes, 42 per cent of the US respondents agreed with the statement: 'The world will end in a battle in Armageddon between Jesus and the Antichrist' – a key element of Darby's system.[4] Literalistic end-time beliefs pervade those sectors of US Protestantism that have grown most rapidly since 1970: the fundamentalist and evangelical denominations; the burgeoning network of independent 'Bible churches' and 'Christian fellowships'; the charismatic and Pentecostal denominations such as the 2.2 million-strong Assemblies of God Church, for whom 'signs and wonders' such as divine healing and glossalalia prove that the end is near. Sixty-three per cent of ministers in the 15-million-member Southern Baptist Convention, America's largest Protestant denomination, profess pre-millennial end-time beliefs.[5] Dispensationalist beliefs are also widespread in areas where these groups engage in missionary work, notably Subsaharan Africa and Latin America.

The ubiquity of Bible prophecy belief in contemporary America is further underscored by the success of cable channels such as the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) and Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN); the prophecy-expounding TV evangelists who beam their message worldwide via satellite; hundreds of Christian radio stations across the land; and the proliferating Internet websites devoted to Bible prophecy. Since the adventist movement led by William Miller in the early 1840s, with its use of circus-tent rallies, high-speed printing presses and colourful mass-produced charts, prophecy popularizers have exploited the latest technologies to spread their message, and this remains true today.

Squadrons of authors labour to meet Americans' seemingly boundless appetite for paperback popularizations of Bible prophecy. Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), a breezy and simplified exposition explaining current global realities in terms of Darby's prophetic system, ranks as *the* non-fiction bestseller of the 1970s. Along with Lindsey, leading prophecy authors and expositors include the venerable John Walvoord, chancellor-emeritus of Lindsey's alma mater, Dallas Theological Seminary; the tireless Jack and Rexella Van Impe, the Michigan-based televangelists with their news-format show commenting on current events from a prophetic perspective; and newcomers such as John Hagee, founder and pastor of the 15,000-member Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas. Pat Robertson's *The End of the Age*, a fictional version of the events surrounding the second coming, achieved bestseller status in 1995. Midnight Call Ministries of Columbia, South Carolina, a consortium of several prominent prophecy writers, is a vast

multimedia enterprise, sponsoring prophecy conferences in resort hotels; tours of Israel; a glossy magazine, *Midnight Call*; and scores of paperbacks and videos examining current events in the light of Bible prophecy.

Prophecy belief is a national, not a regional phenomenon. While somewhat stronger in the South – the traditional heartland of evangelical Protestantism – and somewhat weaker in New England and the upper Atlantic seaboard – where the percentage of evangelical Protestants is smaller – these beliefs are nation-wide in scope, particularly because they are disseminated by tele-vangelists who reach a national audience and by paperback books sold through mass-market outlets like Borders, Barnes & Noble and amazon.com. Leading authors, publishers and promulgators of Bible prophecy are found not only in South Carolina, Texas and Virginia (headquarters of both Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson), but also Michigan, Illinois, California, Oregon and other states as well. Nor are these beliefs confined to the poor or ill-educated. While biblical literalism and pre-millennial beliefs are somewhat more pro-nounced at the lower economic and educational levels, the correlation is far from absolute. These beliefs are found in significant numbers among all social classes and educational ranks.[6]

How uniquely 'American' is this phenomenon? Historians are justifiably sceptical of interpretive models built on notions of American exceptionalism. Yet in numerous studies and polls, Americans consistently score far higher than the British or Western Europeans on such indices as church attendance, biblical literalism, and the importance of religion in their lives.[7] To explore fully the reasons for this disparity would require a far longer chapter, but it is surely linked to the nation's history of religious diversity, dissent and revivalism. American religious polity has been shaped by the absence of a state church and by a *laissez faire* climate in which dissenters, innovators and revivalists were free to proselytize, launch new denominations, and even found entirely new religions, from Mormonism and Christian Science to Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientology and Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God. Since the nation has never had an established church, 'dissent' became the rule rather than the exception. From this perspective, today's puveyors of particular schemes of prophetic interpretation are simply modern-day exemplars of this long-standing tradition of openness and freewheeling innovation.

The prophecy expositors' task is made easier by the ironic fact that the same polls which show such high levels of religious piety in America often also reveal surprisingly low levels of knowledge about the Bible, Christian history or specific religious doctrines. This provides an open field for those who purport to elucidate the meaning and contemporary application of scriptural passages that millions of Americans revere as divinely inspired, but about which their historical or textual knowledge is sketchy at best.

The prophetic view of history may be particularly appealing to Americans for other reasons as well. It is democratic; anyone can offer his or her interpretive scheme, without benefit of advanced degrees or formal training. Investing history with a cosmic meaning and a teleological, goal-oriented aura absent from the textbook versions encountered in the public schools, this belief system is also profoundly utopian; beyond the terrors that lie ahead for the wicked awaits the Millennium. This shimmering vision of the ultimate triumph of righteousness both draws upon and reinforces a national tendency to view political issues in moral terms and to invoke rather stark categories of righteousness and evil in appraising world realities – a worldview deeply embedded in the nation's history. The apocalyptic vision promulgated by contemporary popularizers of pre-millennial dispensationalism, in short, meshes easily with broader strands of American political culture.

Some observers wondered if the end of the Cold War, the collapse of communism, the demise of the Soviet empire, and the diminished threat of global thermonuclear war – frightening realities that had loomed large in the end-time scenarios of the prophecy popularizers for decades – might dampen interest in apocalyptic visions of history's approaching finale. In fact, the widespread preoccupation with Bible prophecy not only remained high, but appeared to *increase* in the 1990s.

The approach of the year 2000, though not the sole factor, unquestionably contributed to this upsurge. To be sure, the prophetic clock for pre-millennial dispensationalists is not tied to the human calendar, and most prophecy popularizers avoid the trap of date-setting: the small-m 'millennium' is a mere artifact of the Western calendar, they insist, unrelated to the capital-M Millennium foretold in Revelation, whose timing is known only to God. Nevertheless, the imminence of the year 2000 clearly resonated with the public, and prophecy popularizers responded by publishing books with teaser titles such as *Planet Earth—2000 A.D.: Will Mankind Survive?*, *2001: On the Edge of Eternity*, and *The End: Why Jesus Could Return by A.D. 2000*.[8]

The 'Left Behind' novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, a projected twelve-part series published by Tyndale House of Wheaton, Illinois, describing the final stages of human history from a pre-millennial–dispensationalist perspective, sold at a phenomenal clip in the later 1990s. As of spring 1999, readers had snapped up more than 7 million copies of the first five volumes in the series and related 'Left Behind' products. *Left Behind* (1995) vividly describes the Rapture and its aftermath in contemporary terms. *Tribulation Force* (1997) explores the adventures of a group of 'Tribulation Saints' who prepare for a survivalist existence during the Great Tribulation, relying on CNN for news, communicating by e-mail, and pursuing biblical studies via the Internet. *Nicolae* (1998) describes the rise of the Antichrist, Nicolae

Carpathia, the charismatic Secretary General of the United Nations who deludes the masses by spouting the language of peace and international understanding. *Soul Harvest: The World Takes Sides* (1998) carries the embattled saints deeper into the Tribulation. In *Apollyon: The Destroyer is Unleashed* (1999), the Antichrist reveals his true nature while the Tribulation Saints struggle to survive while grappling with a variety of marital and reproductive dilemmas and crises in their interpersonal relationships. Audio and videocassette versions of the series were available, as was a junior edition, summed up in a dustjacket blurb as 'Four Kids Face Earth's Last Days Together'. By 1999 a movie version was in the works; Tyndale House's busy publicity office was scheduling authors' appearances and sending press kits to journalists; readers' enthusiastic comments could be perused on the Internet; and further information about the series was available on Tyndale House's website.

Isaac and Ishmael: Israel and Its Neighbours in Postwar Prophecy Popularizations

The prophetic role of the Jews and other peoples of the Middle East engaged students of Bible prophecy from the earliest Christian era onwards, and was central in John Darby's system.[9] Indeed, a key, and controversial, feature of Darby's dispensationalist scheme was his sharp distinction between God's plan for the Jews and his plan for everyone else. Prophecy writers from the Middle Ages on had discerned a special destiny for the Jews – often casting them in a demonic role, as we shall see – and Darby intensified this distinction, demarcating Jews from the rest of humanity and treating their sacred history, past and future, as wholly distinct from that of the Gentiles. Subsequent expositors and popularizers followed Darby's lead. After the Second World War, this preoccupation with the Jews in prophecy manifested itself in various ways, including close attention to Israel's prophetic significance; the new nation's future boundaries; the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple; the Jews' fate during Antichrist's reign; and the role of their ancient foes – the Arabs and Muslims – in God's unfolding plan.

Citing Jesus's parable of the budding fig tree (Luke 21: 29–31) as an allusion to the Jews' restoration to their land, and thus as a key to the timing of the Rapture and subsequent eschatological events, prophecy writers had long foreseen the restoration of the Jews to Palestine as evidence of Christ's near return. Darby and Scofield made this belief a central tenet of premillennial dispensationalism. One oft-cited text, for example, was the poetic passage found in Amos 9: 14–15:

> And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

> And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

Thus the beginnings of Zionism in the 1890s; the 1917 Balfour Declaration, expressing Britain's support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine; and, above all, the creation of the Jewish state in 1948 stirred tremendous excitement among prophecy believers. Hal Lindsey and scores of other postwar popularizers hailed the establishment of Israel, and the Israelis' capture of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967, as prophetic signs of the first importance.

Bible prophecy also provided a key to the new nation's ultimate boundaries. In Genesis 15: 18, Jehovah tells Abram, the future Abraham, that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars, and will one day occupy all the land 'from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates'. In this text, dispensationalists found not only a prophecy of Israel's national rebirth, but also of its vast future expansion. (Many interpreters understood the 'river of Egypt' to mean the Nile; others placed it somewhat further east.) The more scrupulous interpreters foresaw this expansion in the future millennial age, but many popularizers blurred this distinction, and used the Genesis text to justify Israeli claims to the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights and so forth.

Further emphasizing the Jews' special role in the larger prophetic plan, postwar popularizers cited texts that they believed foretold the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE – on a site now occupied by two sacred Islamic shrines, the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque. Theories varied about how these shrines would be removed. Some suggested, rather implausibly, that Muslim authorities might voluntarily dismantle and rebuild them, stone by stone, in Mecca. Others foresaw a divine intervention in the form of an earthquake, or destruction of the troublesome structures in an Arab–Israeli war. By whatever means, however, a rebuilt Temple, as the site of Christ's millennial rule, remained an article of faith for postwar prophecy interpreters.

While these writers insisted that they were not taking political positions, but simply interpreting Bible prophecy, an anti-Arab, anti-Islamic undercurrent pervaded their expositions of the Jews' expansive and divinely sanctioned territorial rights and the rebuilding of the Temple on its ancient foundations. In fact, demonic images of Islam have pervaded interpretations of Bible prophecy since the early Middle Ages, particularly in response to Muslim expansion into Christian regions. A popular religious treatise in Spain after the

Umayyad Muslim invasion from North Africa in 711 CE was the *Commentary on Revelation* written around 780 by Beatus, a monk in a remote monastery in the Pyrenees. In the rich illuminations added by pious scribes who copied and recopied this highly revered work, one finds the Antichrist represented as a Muslim potentate, and the Whore of Babylon (Revelation 17) portrayed in costumes and settings evocative of the Muslim-occupied regions of Spain.[10]

The Muslim occupation of Jerusalem and its holy places stirred the Christian world to dire apocalyptic speculation, particularly in the eleventh century, when Christian pilgrims began to be persecuted. After 1071, when Jerusalem passed from the control of the Egyptian Fatimids to the Seljuk Turks, who posed a particular menace to Byzantium, apocalyptic fervour intensified in Europe. This fervour culminated in the first Crusade (1095–99), proclaimed by Pope Urban II to recapture Jerusalem's holy sites from the infidels. The visionary and incendiary language of the crusades, which continued intermittently for two centuries, was full of apocalyptic imagery interpreting the protection, or recovery, of Jerusalem from the Muslims as essential to the fulfilment of the Bible's end-time prophecies. The Calabrian monk Joachim of Fiore (*c.* 1132–1202), a celebrated medieval prophecy expositor, was much influenced by the depredations of the contemporary Muslim leader and warrior Saladin, who recaptured Jerusalem in 1187. Offering a partially historical, partially futurist reading of the Book of Revelation, the Apocalypse of John, Joachim concluded that Muhammad had been the fourth head of the seven-headed dragon described in chapters 12 and 17, and Saladin the sixth and last before the ultimate satanic ruler, the Antichrist. When Richard I of England, leader of the Third Crusade (1189–92), was en route to Palestine he conferred with Joachim, who informed him of Saladin's prophetic significance, and foretold the Muslim ruler's defeat by Richard – a prophecy that failed.[11]

The fall of Constantinople to Muslim forces in 1453 revived speculation linking Islam to the Antichrist. Christopher Columbus's *Book of Prophecies*, assembled in 1501, after the explorer's third voyage to the New World, was designed to persuade his patrons, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, to sponsor yet another crusade to recover Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple – using gold from the New World – to usher in the Millennium. The belief in Islam's demonic end-time role proved remarkably tenacious in prophetic interpretation. Martin Luther identified Antichrist with Islam, although as his struggle with the Catholic Church intensified he shifted focus, concluding by 1518 that 'today Rome is worse than the Turks'. As late as 1530, however, in his German Bible, Luther identified the Turks as Gog, the mysterious northern kingdom whose doom is pronounced in Ezekiel 38–9. During the centuries when the Ottoman empire dominated the Middle East and parts of Eastern

Europe, prophecy interpreters routinely treated Islam as a forerunner of the Antichrist and identified the Ottoman realm as Gog. Only after 1917, when the weakened Ottoman empire finally collapsed and the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia, did prophecy popularizers downgrade Islam and move Russia to centre stage as a sinister actor in their end-time drama.[12]

   The Islamic menace and the role of the Arabs as a negative pole in the cosmic struggle between good and evil never wholly disappeared from prophetic interpretations, and these themes, although partially eclipsed by the Soviet menace, figured prominently in post–Second World War prophecy popularizations. One author in 1968 discussing land disputes in the Middle East wrote: 'God will in his own good time cast out the sons of Ishmael, despite all their devisings and intrigues, and will settle the sons of Isaac.' Another asserted tersely: 'The Arab world is an Antichrist world.'

   As the allusions to Ishmael and Isaac suggest, postwar prophecy writers often retold the biblical story of the barrenness of Abraham's aged wife Sarah; of Abraham's fathering of Ishmael by the maidservant Hagar; of Sarah's subsequent miraculous conception; and of the birth of Abraham's legitimate son, Isaac. In the Jewish version of the myth, recorded in Genesis, Isaac inherits God's covenant with his father and founds the Jewish nation, while Ishmael – progenitor of the Arab peoples – becomes an outcast, banished from divine favour. In recounting this origins myth, postwar prophecy popularizers applied it literally to the territorial disputes of the late twentieth century, as irrefutable evidence for Israel's claims and proof of the spuriousness of the counter-claims of the displaced Palestinians and their supporters. As early as 1947, in a striking melding of biblical lore and contemporary Middle Eastern politics, a writer in *Moody Monthly*, a major dispensationalist periodical, rather wistfully observed: 'Had Sarah believed God, there would have been no Palestine problem today. Had she not given her slave girl, Hagar, to Abraham, there would have been no Arabs.'

   The same writers who demonized the Arabs and gloried in Israel's thrilling prophetic destiny also portrayed the long history of anti-Semitic persecutions, expulsions and murderous outbursts as God's 'chastisement' of his wayward people for their failure to recognize Jesus as the Messiah – punishments amply prefigured in the Hebrew scriptures when the Israelites fell into idolatry, as they did with depresssing regularity. In a chapter in *The Late Great Planet Earth* called 'God's Woodshed', on the persecution of the Jews throughout history, including the Nazi Holocaust, Hal Lindsey wrote: 'Israel's history of misery which has exactly fulfilled prophetic warnings should be a sign to the whole world that God means what He says, and says what He means.'

   According to the dispensationalists' scheme, the Jews' plight will worsen during the Great Tribulation, when the Antichrist will viciously persecute

them because of their status as God's chosen people. In this mass slaughter, many prophecy popularizers claimed, two-thirds of all Jews will die – a specific ratio derived from Zechariah 13: 8: 'And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.' This persecution was often linked to a passage in Revelation 7: 4 in which 144,000 Jews, drawn from the twelve tribes of Israel, are divinely 'sealed' during the Antichrist's reign. Many popularizers took this to mean that 144,000 Jews will convert to Christ during the Tribulation period. (Hal Lindsey, with typical imaginative flair, called them '144,000 Jewish Billy Grahams'.) Antichrist's rage over this challenge to his rule, these writers suggested, will trigger his mass slaughter.[13] Arthur Bloomfield, in *How to Recognize the Antichrist* (1975) wrote: 'Antichrist's persecution will be much more terrible than Hitler's. Hitler got rid of six million Jews, but Antichrist's purpose will be to do away with all Jews of all nations.' When the dispensationalist expositor J. Dwight Pentecost of Dallas Theological Seminary was asked in 1989 if this Tribulation-era Jewish holocaust could be avoided, his response was consistent with this belief system: 'Prophetically, the only thing that could prevent it is Israel's repentance.' In short, Jewish holocausts past and future are part of God's plan, inexorably inscribed in the prophecies, a lamentable consequence of most Jews' failure to recognize the Messiah when he walked among them, and of their continued unbelief. In 1991, when I visited Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, with its harrowing photographs and artifacts, a fundamentalist prophecy-believer touring the museum at the same time whispered to me: 'Surely when Jews see this, they must realize what a mistake they made in rejecting Christ.'

It would be wrong, however, to view this feature of the dispensationalist scheme as simply a mask for anti-Semitism. While overt anti-Semitism does appear in some pre-Second World War prophecy popularizations, it is rare in postwar writings. Vicious anti-Semitism pervades the racist diatribes of the 'Christian' hate groups studied by political scientist Michael Barkun,[14] but the 'mainstream' dispensationalist popularizers who hold forth in thousands of fundamentalist and charismatic pulpits, dominate religious broadcasting and sell books by the millions are more typically intensely philo-Semitic. They write feelingly of God's reluctant 'chastisement' of his chosen but wayward people, and of what Darbyite teaching tells them lies ahead for Jews who persist in unbelief. Yet overall – and increasingly so in the 1990s, as we shall see – these writers emphasized the centrality of the Jews' prophetic role and expressed their unqualified support for Israel and its sacred destiny. As John Walvoord wrote in his million-copy-seller *Armageddon, Oil, and the Middle East Crisis* (1974, revised 1990), Israel's entire history since 1948 offered a 'remarkable record of divine providence'. For Walvoord, the Israeli

army's success in the 1967 Six-Day War, like the Israelites' triumphs recorded in the Old Testament, demonstrated 'God's remarkable intervention' in the affairs of his spiritually blind but still beloved people.[15]

Positive pronouncements such as this, in fact, mark a major discontinuity between medieval and Reformation-era prophetic interpretations and those of the modern era. In most of the early interpretive schemes, Jews and Muslims were grouped together as equally loathsome manifestations of the evil, Antichristian element in the world whose final extermination is foretold in scripture. Indeed, as the First Crusade was being organized, marauding bands of Crusaders, inflamed by anti-Semitic harangues, slaughtered thousands of European Jews, especially in the Rhenish cities, before sailing for Palestine to battle the Muslims. Once the Crusaders reached Jerusalem, they killed Jews and Muslims alike.[16] This linking of Jews and Muslims as equally vile eschatological enemies long endured. Martin Luther's notorious anti-Semitism, for example, matching his hatred of Islam, is well known.

Contemporary prophecy popularizations, by contrast, treat the Jews much more affirmatively. While Jewish persecution past and future is sometimes still (regretfully) portrayed as divinely ordained, the Jews in general are honoured as the chosen people whose ultimate redemption is assured; the establishment of Israel is welcomed as a key event in the prophetic plan; and Israel's vast future expansion is foretold. The treatment of Islam, by contrast, shows no such evolution; it remains uniformly hostile and negative. Saddam Hussein may be substituted for Saladin, and 'Islamic terrorists' for the Saracens or the Turks, but the unrelieved hostility of the overall treatment would be wholly recognizable to the illuminators of the Beatus manuscripts, to Joachim of Fiore or to Martin Luther.

Such, then, in broad brush strokes, was the general treatment of Jews and Muslims in hundreds of paperback popularizations of Bible prophecy, as well as countless sermons, TV programmes, audio cassettes and videotapes that spread the dispensationalist message in North America and beyond from the Second World War to around 1990. What emerged from this intense, densely textured treatment of Middle Eastern affairs from a dispensationalist viewpoint was a mixed but generally positive view of the Jewish people – subject to periodic persecution permitted by a loving but righteous God because of their unfaithfulness, but nevertheless divinely chosen and the beneficiaries of God's tender oversight and promises of future blessedness. As for the Palestinians and Israel's Arab neighbours, the writers exhibited far less ambivalence: they might be pitied for their fate, but their prophetic destiny was to step aside, or be driven aside, as modern-day Jews claimed the rights and privileges bestowed by Jehovah upon their progenitors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob millennia before.

Popular Prophetic Belief since the End of the Cold War: Old Wine in New Bottles

From the end of the Second World War through the 1980s, the years of the Cold War and the nuclear arms race, popularizers of pre-millennial dispensationalism promulgated a scenario of Last-days events adapted to the global realities of these years. Key elements of this scenario – fully on display in Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* – included a global thermonuclear war (fulfilling prophecies of the earth's fiery destruction in II Peter 3: 10 and elsewhere); Russia's invasion of Israel and subsequent destruction (based on Ezekiel 38–9); the rise of a network of international organizations, preparing the way for Antichrist's world rule (derived from an interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's allegorical dream of successive world empires recorded in the Book of Daniel); an invasion across the Euphrates by hordes of Chinese communists (the 'kings of the east' of Revelation 16: 12), setting the stage for the Battle of Armageddon; and unremitting hostility and warfare between Israel and its neighbours.

As the 1990s dawned, a cataclysmic upheaval in world power relationships left the Soviet Union in ruins, Russia enfeebled, the threat of global nuclear war much diminished; and prospects for a Middle East peace settlement seemingly bright in the aftermath of the 1993 Oslo Accords, as Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat renounced terrorism and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin pledged a phased withdrawal from the Occupied Territories.

With the global realities that had given plausibility to the Cold War-era prophetic scenario so radically altered, interest in Bible prophecy seemed likely to fade. In fact, of course, as we have seen, popularizations of Bible prophecy flourished in the 1990s, and the basic dispensationalist scenario as formulated by Darby and Scofield – the accumulating 'signs of the times' signalling the nearness of the end, the Rapture, the Tribulation, Antichrist's rule, the Battle of Armageddon, the Millennium – remained firmly in place. But in the aftermath of the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s, prophecy popularizers combing the headlines for material emphasized some themes more heavily, and subtly downgraded others, to fit the new configuration of current events.

Documenting the emergence of the global system that the Antichrist will exploit, for example, the prophecy popularizers seized upon President George Bush's proclamation of a post-Cold War 'New World Order'. Indeed, this was the title of a 1991 paperback by Pat Robertson tracing the roots of this demonic international system to the Masons; the Bavarian Illuminati; the Rothschilds; and the first US Congress, which included the sinister phrase *Novus Ordo Seclorum* in the Great Seal of the United States.

Detailing all the tentacles of this new world system, post-Cold War prophecy expositors focused not only on the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and other governmental organizations, but also on the emerging global economy, international consumer-product codes, the giant multinational corporations, world-wide satellite communications systems, the European Union, the North American trading bloc, massive computer data bases, the Internet, the World Wide Web, and so forth. When the Antichrist arises, they insisted, the technological and bureaucratic infrastructure will be fully in place enabling him to beam his false message of peace world-wide, take advantage of global television to win the world's allegience, and employ computers to impose and sustain his political and economic dictatorship.

The post-Cold War decade also provided all-too-abundant instances of the increasing wickedness and conflict foretold by Jesus as signs of the Last Days. From central Africa to the Balkans, from the AIDS epidemic to sex on the Internet, from O. J. Simpson to Monica Lewinsky, the prophecy writers had little difficulty adducing evidence that the wickedness of the days of Noah, and of Sodom and Gomorrah, are indeed upon us, signalling the approaching end.

The theme of environmental catastrophe, so vividly evoked in the falling stars, darkening sun, rivers of blood, horrible sores and monstrous insects of the Book of Revelation, also figured prominently in the prophecy popularizations of the 1990s, as writers and preachers combed the media for accounts of global warming; acid rain; bizarre genetic experiments; increased solar radiation resulting from a thinning ozone layer; freakish weather associated with El Nino; and exotic new menaces affecting the air, water and food supply. Hal Lindsey in *Planet Earth—2000 A.D.* (1994), offering a litany of alarming environmental hazards, commented: 'The physical tribulations of the Earth and its environment have been one of the most significant developments – prophetically speaking – since I authored *the Late Great Planet Earth* 25 years ago.'[17] Indeed, the line between religious apocalyptic and secular apocalyptic sometimes grew faint. The title of Rodney Barker's 1997 work *And the Waters Turned to Blood* might well have placed it in bookstores' 'Prophecy' section, whereas in fact it discussed a deadly micro-organism appearing in the waterways of the southern United States.

Other components of the Cold War prophetic narrative were played down in response to the new world situation. As the likelihood of global thermonuclear war diminished, prophecy writers generally left to God the details of how the world will be destroyed, as their pre-1945 predecessors had done. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, some popularizers, seeking to salvage the familiar scenario, initially warned that this was just a communist trick. After all, do not the scriptures warn '[W]hen they shall say peace and safety,

then sudden destruction cometh upon them'?[18] Others (echoing many secular strategists) cautioned that a weakened Russia could be more dangerous than a powerful, unified Soviet Union. Jack Van Impe, the source of countless Cold War era TV sermons, videotapes and paperbacks on the coming Russian invasion of Israel, warned in 1996 that Russia, while seemingly feeble and prostrate, could be preparing 'the greatest sneak attack in history',[19] but, in general, Russia's position in the post-Cold War prophetic scenario was sharply downgraded to, at most, a supporting role in an Arab-led coalition, which leads us back to a central theme of this chapter.

The Middle East in Post-Cold War Prophecy Popularizations

The end of the Cold War brought some interesting shifts of tone and emphasis in the prophecy popularizers' treatment of Israel, the Jews and Islam. First, the attention given to the Middle East increased dramatically. Further, the theme of Islam as a menacing force destined for a demonic eschatological role received heavy emphasis. Indeed, Islam embodied evil in these post-Cold War prophecy scenarios much as the Soviet Union did during the Cold War.

The Persian Gulf War of 1990–91 focused particular attention on the possible prophetic role of Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein.[20] Iraq's attack on Kuwait and the war that followed, including Iraqi missile attacks on Israel, brought prophetic speculation to fever pitch. John Walvoord's publisher rushed into print an update of his 1973 bestseller *Armageddon, Oil, and the Middle East Crisis*. Audiences flocked to rallies to hear evangelists discuss the conflict's eschatological significance. Commented Billy Graham: 'These events are happening in that part of the world where history began, and, the Bible says, where history as we know it, will some day end.' Others linked Saddam to specific prophecies, suggesting, for example, that the 'noisome and grievous sore[s]' mentioned in Revelation 16 could refer to an Iraqi chemical or biological weapons attack.

Few prophecy writers fingered Saddam as the Antichrist, reflecting the dispensationalist view (based, as we have seen, on an interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream recorded in the Book of Daniel) that the Antichrist will initially head a confederation of European nations, and will arise only after the Rapture. Nevertheless, many writers insisted on Saddam's profound if somewhat uncertain prophetic significance. Wrote Moishe Rosen, founder of Jews for Jesus, in 1991: 'Is Saddam Hussein ... the Antichrist? I hardly think so. But as much as any other man who ever lived, he has represented the spirit of Antichrist about which the Bible warns.'[21] Rosen's organization placed full-page ads in the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe* and other major

newspapers linking Saddam to the Antichrist and urging readers to dial '900–4–MESSIAH' for more information.

Special attention focused on Saddam's rebuilding of ancient Babylon, the symbol of wickedness in the Bible, whose destruction by fire is foretold in Isaiah 13 and again in Revelation 18. Since Babylon obviously cannot be destroyed unless it exists, Saddam's reconstruction project took on profound eschatological significance. Charles H. Dyer of Dallas Theological Seminary in his bestselling *The Rise of Babylon: Sign of the End Times* (1991), with its cover illustration juxtaposing Saddam's image with that of King Nebuchadnezzar, reflected on Babylon's prophesied destruction: '[W]ho will destroy it? The United States? Will America wipe out Iraq? Unfortunately, Isaiah does not give us any information about the United States. But the United States is a major world power – how could it *not* play a major role in the last days?'[22] A 1996 prophecy videotape, *Babylon: Past, Present, and Future*, interwove a well-researched history of the city, an account of the rebuilding project, and graphically imagined scenes of Babylon's fiery destruction as prophesied in Revelation. In *A Palace for the Antichrist* (1997), Joseph Chambers underscored Babylon's eschatological significance:

> There are two eternal cities. One will end in glory, and the second will be buried in judgment. One is the capital of all that is righteous, and the other is the stronghold of every unclean spirit … Babylon represents everything that is the opposite of Jerusalem. These two cities must always be seen as antithesis to each other … Everything that is evil must ultimately connect to Babylon, and everything that is holy must always connect to Jerusalem.[23]

The preoccupation with Saddam Hussein was only part of a larger post-Cold War emphasis on the menace of Islam and the Arab world as enemies of God and of Israel. (The religious designations 'Islam' and 'Muslim' and the ethnic term 'Arab' were often used interchangeably by these writers.) In the Cold War prophecy writers' accounts of the Soviet Union's coming invasion of Israel, the Arab states generally played minor supporting roles. The prophecy scenarios of the 1990s reversed the positions: the Arab states organize and lead the attack, with Russia simply part of the alliance.

Jack Van Impe, while still warning of a Russian surprise attack in *2001: On the Edge of Eternity*, highlighted Islam as the satanic end-time power that will battle the forces of righteousness. 'Forget "Open Sesame",' he advised,

> because it will take more than two magic words to open the hearts and minds of those who espouse the name of Allah, and believe that Muhammad is his prophet … [W]hile the fundamental teachings of Muhammad remain un-changed, Islam's religious, political, and economic powers have grown so

enormous that the foundations of the region, and now the world, are being shaken … Once known largely for its deserts, camels, over-nourished potentates, and tales of the *Thousand and One Nights*, the Fertile Crescent is now recognized for its money, Mercedes, mansions, oil, political power, and, by some, the key role it will play in world history as we approach ... the edge of eternity.

Like communist-hunters during the Red Scare, Van Impe found the threat of subversion everywhere: 'Devoted Islamics continue to invade every corner of the world with the message of Muhammad. If you don't believe Islam is making an international impact, just count the number of mosques being built in major European and American cities.' Recasting the dispensationalist scenario, Van Impe foresaw a powerful end-time Muslim alliance, aided by Russia, invading Israel, ultimately to be destroyed by supernatural power. To understand 'the threat of Islam', he advised, '[r]ead your Bible with fresh eyes, and with a view to developing a deeper understanding of the end time prophecies'.[24]

Another successful prophecy writer, Dave Hunt, struck a similar note in *A Cup of Trembling: Jerusalem and Bible Prophecy* (1995):

Islam is fighting a *holy war* for control of the world! That war was begun by Mohammed himself … and is still carried on today by his faithful followers through terrorism. The terrorists are not *radicals* or *extremists*, as the media continually labels them. Instead, these are islamic *fundamentalists* who are true to their religion and the teachings of the Koran and who follow faithfully in the footsteps of their great prophet, Mohammed … [V]iolence and terrorism have been the means of spreading Islam from the very beginning.

Reducing complex issues to stark polarities of good and evil in a manner characteristic of the apocalyptic genre, Hunt wrote: 'To the Western mind, it is unthinkable that "God" should encourage such slaughter. To the Muslim, however, violence and bloodshed are the highest expressions of religion and the surest way to eternal reward.'[25]

After nearly a century when communism and the Soviet Union had replaced Islam and the Muslim world as key actors in the dispensationalists' grand end-time drama, a rash of prophecy popularizations of the 1990s restored Islam to its earlier primacy in the hierarchy of evil. Lindsey in *Planet Earth—2000 A.D.* identified the Muslim world with Ishmael, and cited the curse placed upon Ishmael by Jehovah in Genesis 16: 'He shall be a wild man, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him.' In *The Final Battle* (1995), Lindsey explicitly acknowledged the post-Cold War reconfiguraton of the grand narrative:

Today, Communism appears to be on its way to the ash heap of history. But a greater threat – a more evil empire – is quietly, without fanfare, filling the void left by the breakup of the Soviet Union. This movement seeks not only to destroy the state of Israel but also the overthrow of Judeo-Christian culture – the very foundation of our western civilization … The name of this movement – the greatest threat to freedom and world peace today – is Islamic fundamentalism … More than at any time since the Crusades, Islam is posing a serious threat to the Western world. It now possesses the wealth *and the modern lethal weaponry* to supplant the Soviet Union as the greatest challenge to the Judeo-Christian based Western world order … What started as a sibling rivalry [i.e., Ishmael and Isaac] and evolved into a racial blood feud has escalated into a deadly religious war that threatens the whole planet.[26]

While Islam was portrayed in unqualifiedly negative terms in the 1990s' prophecy popularizations, many writers and preachers continued to represent the Jews as divinely blessed, though rebellious. As Lindsey put it in *Apocalypse Code* (1997): 'While God has a special place in His heart for the Jews, He has also allowed a national spiritual blindness to come upon them, [leading to their] worldwide dispersion and persecution…[But] God kept his promise of eternal blessings and will someday restore the Jews to a position of special favor.'[27]

Citing Daniel 9: 27 and a variety of other biblical passages, the popularizers of the 1990s restated the dispensationalist scenario for the Jews: after the Rapture, the Antichrist, masquerading as a peacemaker, will sign a pact guaranteeing Israel's safety. Midway through the Tribulation, he will betray Israel, desecrate the rebuilt Temple by erecting a statue to himself, and proclaim his divinity. This blasphemy will unleash the truly horrific phase of the Tribulation as the Antichrist imposes his world rule and persecutes all who refuse to worship him, most especially the Jews, who at last realize their error. As the 144,000 'Jewish Billy Grahams' win more and more converts to Christ, Antichrist's fury will increase. The horrors will end only at Armageddon, with Christ's overthrow of the false Messiah.[28]

Despite the Jews' unbelief in the present dispensation, these writers insisted, God continues to watch over Israel because of its prophetic role as the seat of Christ's millennial kingdom. In each of Israel's five modern wars, Lindsey wrote in *Apocalypse Code*, it enjoyed a 'divine hand of protection'. While the Church enjoys God's favour in the present age, he went on, 'very soon … God's special focus and blessing is going to shift back to the Jews' and 'they will be spiritually restored as well as physically restored'.[29]

Following a long-established pattern, post-Cold War prophecy writers freely commented on current political and strategic issues, including Middle

Eastern affairs, buttressing their opinions with biblical texts. Dave Hunt, for example, thundered against the Oslo Accords and its land-for-peace formula: 'All parties involved in this unbiblical giveaway, including Israel herself for her consent, will be punished severely. So say the prophets.'[30] Suiting action to words, Jerry Falwell in 1998 launched a campaign to mobilize American evangelicals to oppose implementation of the Oslo Accords and any further Israeli concessions to the Palestinians.

The Canadian expositor Grant Jeffrey, in a 1997 revision of his bestselling *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny*, after affirming God's covenant undergirding Israel's territorial claims, went on:

> If Israel's present government … continues the disastrous policies of former prime ministers Rabin and Peres and surrenders the vital strategic territory in the West Bank and the Golan Heights in its 'Land for Peace' negotiations with the PLO and its Arab neighbors, Israel will face military disaster in the next war … [and] may be quickly forced to resort to nuclear weapons when they find their small diminished territory about to be overcome by Arab armies.

Implicitly advocating the expulsion of non-Jews from Israeli-occupied lands, Jeffrey asked rhetorically: 'Why should Israel surrender its incredibly small and strategically vital territory to her Arab enemies when the Islamic states have more than a thousand times the land and … vast oil wealth that can be utilized to absorb the Palestinian Arabs.' Like other prophecy writers, Jeffrey, too, saw Arab hostility to Israel and the Jews as the inevitable consequence of God's curse on Ishmael ('his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him', etc.). 'Unfortunately,' he commented, 'this prophecy has been tragically fulfilled in the thousands of years of hatred between the Arabs, the descendants of Ishmael, and the Jews, the sons of Isaac.'[31]

The same note was struck in *The End: Why Jesus Could Return by A.D. 2000*, a 1997 popularization of dispensationalism by the Rev'd Ed Dobson, pastor of the 3,000-member Calvary Church in Grand Rapids, and a former aide to Jerry Falwell. After describing a meeting arranged by Falwell between then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin and a group of evangelical Protestant leaders and prophecy writers, Dobson reiterated Israel's vital prophetic role: 'Does God have a future plan for Israel? Absolutely! All his promises toward Israel will be fulfilled. To doubt this future hope is to ignore the clear teaching of both the Old and New Testaments … [The Jews] will endure a time of suffering (the Tribulation) that will once again lead to their redemption (the return of Messiah to establish the kingdom).'[32]

Dobson, too, saw Arab–Israeli hostility as continuing until Israel, with God's help, finally obliterates its foes. Futile peace efforts, he wrote, 'have not dramatically altered the hatred for Israel that exists in the Middle East – a

hatred that has endured for more than four thousand years'. Rehearsing the Ishmael–Isaac story, he went on: '[T]he problem that began with Abraham and his two sons … will continue until Jesus returns … This hatred will even intensify and become a major factor leading to the Battle of Armageddon.'[33] Specific terrorist groups such as Hamas, he suggested, are merely the operational arm of a satanically-inspired campaign of Jewish extermination supported by the entire Arab world and all Muslims everywhere.

Hal Lindsey added to the anti-Islamic chorus in his 1996 novel *Blood Moon*, a fictionalized treatment of pre-millennial dispensationalism focusing on Arab–Israeli relations. *Blood Moon* features an Islamic revolutionary, *Ishmael* Muhammed, who acquires nuclear missiles from Russian gangsters, rallies a coalition of Arab states, and unleashes a nuclear assault on Israel. But the attack is foiled by the head of Israel's nuclear defence force: *Isaac* Barak. In retaliation, Israel utterly destroys 'every Arab and Muslim capital … along with the infrastructure of their nations'. Ishmael Muhammed rallies a Muslim army for a final desperate assault on Jerusalem, but at this moment Jesus Christ returns and miraculously vaporizes the Muslim troops. Paraphrasing a passage in Zechariah 14: 12, Lindsey describes the fate of the Islamic forces: '[A] bright light shone from heaven and a wave of heat swept through the attackers. Within seconds their flesh literally melted away while they stood on their feet, their eyes burst in their sockets and their tongues rotted away in their mouths.'[34]

All these themes emerge with particular clarity in the bestselling works of another successful prophecy writer of the later 1990s, the Rev'd John Hagee: *Beginning of the End* (1996); *Day of Deception* (1997); and *Final Dawn Over Jerusalem* (1998). Just as Cold War prophecy popularizers invested the US–Soviet conflict with eschatological significance, so Hagee viewed the Arab–Israeli conflict through a prism of prophetic meaning. For him, as for so many others, the founding of Israel on 15 May 1948 represented a stunning prophetic fulfilment. As an eight-year-old, he relates, he heard the news on the radio and was solemnly informed by his father, an avid prophecy believer: 'We have just heard the most important prophetic message that will ever be delivered until Jesus returns to earth.'

Israel's right to the land is rooted in God's promise to Abraham, transmitted to Isaac and Jacob and their descendants for ever, Hagee insisted, and Israel will eventually expand to its promised borders, encompassing 'all of present-day Israel, all of Lebanon, half of Syria, two-thirds of Jordan, all of Iraq, and the northern portion of Saudi Arabia'. Introduced to Prime Minister Rabin by a Jewish fundraising group, Hagee met with him several times and gained a reputation as a firm friend of Israel. Beginning in 1981, he organized an annual 'Night to Honor Israel' in his 15,000-member San Antonio church,

eventually extending these events to other Texas cities and as far as Phoenix, Tulsa and Los Angeles.[35]

With equal force, Hagee portrayed the Muslim world as the eternal foe of Israel and of God's purposes, gripped by a blind hatred of Jews (and of Christians) springing from 'the ancient rivalry between Isaac and Ishamel'. The vow to destroy Israel, rooted in the Qur'an, unites all Muslims, he wrote: 'To the Muslims, Israel is as troublesome as a cornered copperhead. But mark this: if the Arabs do not eventually defeat Israel in combat, Muhammad lies, the Koran is in error, and Allah is not the true God. These are heretical ideas to the Muslim – absolutely unthinkable.'[36] Just as Cold War prophecy writers dismissed as pointless all efforts at the political resolution of differences with the Soviet Union, they now preached a similar view of the Middle East conflict: destined to end in a prophesied bloodbath at the end of time, it can in the interim only grow worse, never improve.

Hagee placed this final confrontation during the Tribulation, when Israel, eager to rebuild the Temple, will destroy the Muslim holy places on Temple Mount. This will so outrage all Muslims that they will form a 'Pan-Islamic Coalition' to exterminate Israel once and for all. In alliance with Russia, and joined by hordes of African converts to Islam (Ezekiel 30: 5), the coalition will launch its assault. But God will intervene (Ezekiel 38 again), destroying the advancing armies by fire and brimstone – possibly aided by Israeli nuclear weapons – in a slaughter of horrendous proportions. 'Ezekiel says that the bloated bodies of the enemies of Israel will be a banquet for buzzards. The beasts of the field will have a feast unlike anything since dogs ate the body of Jezebel.'[37]

In *Final Dawn Over Jerusalem*, Hagee began with an impassioned denunciation of anti-Semitism, and a reminder of the Jewishness of Jesus:

> Too many Christians believe that Jesus was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Christ … and that he later called twelve nice, blond, blue-eyed disciples … If Jesus Christ came to your church this Sunday morning … He would appear small and slender, with penetrating dark eyes, a swarthy complexion, and prominent Semitic features. He would have earlocks, hair uncut at the corners, and full beard. His shoulders would be draped with a tallit, or prayer shawl … The simple truth is this: after 2,000 years of anti-Semitic teaching and preaching, we have lost sight of the Jewishness of our Hebrew Savior. But He was born to Jewish parents, His ancestors were Jewish, He was raised in the Jewish tradition, He lived and worshiped as a Jew, He died as a Jew, and he will return as a Jew. When you kneel tonight to pray, the One who hears you is a Rabbi named Jesus of Nazareth.[38]

Jews have contributed greatly to all societies where they have lived, in-

cluding the United States, Hagee went on, offering long lists of American Jews who have played important roles in many fields. Departing from dispensational orthodoxy, he denied that God abandoned the Jews after Jesus's crucifixion and shifted his favour to the Gentiles. Similarly, he vehemently rejected the view, advanced by Lindsey and many others, that Jewish persecutions past and future reflect God's punishment for their unbelief. Such persecutions simply arise from human hatred and prejudice, he insisted, and should be utterly condemned by all Christians.[39]

While he repudiated anti-Semitism and passionately reaffirmed the bond between Jews and Christians, Hagee in *Final Dawn Over Jerusalem* portrayed Islam and the Arab world in even more sinister terms than in his earlier work. Arab hatred of the Jews, he wrote, is the impotent fury of a group excluded from the divine promise given to Abraham:

> The conflict between Arabs and Jews goes deeper than disputes over the lands of Palestine. It is theological. It is Judaism versus Islam. Islam's theology insists that Islam triumph over everything else – that's why when you visit an Arabic city, the Islamic prayer tower is the highest point in the city … No matter what the Arabs say about peace, their religion demands that they defeat the Jews … Muslims believe that it is the will of God for Islam to rule the world … For that reason, the fundamentalist Muslims must attack Israel and the Jews in order to be loyal to their prophet. The strategy of Islamic Jihad is as simple as it is satanic: 'Kill so many Jews that they will eventually abandon Palestine.'[40]

Having so eloquently attacked the bleak history of Christian libels against the Jews, Hagee proceeded to offer his own sweeping and intensely hostile stereotypes of 'Islam' and 'Arabs'.

Emulating other recent popularizers in pronouncing on specific issues under contention, Hagee insisted on the urgent importance of absolute and exclusive Jewish control of Jerusalem: 'The enemies of Israel and the Jewish people will not be satisfied until they control Jerusalem. Christians and Jews, let us stand united and indivisible on this issue: there can be no compromise regarding the city of Jerusalem, not now, not ever. We are racing toward the end of time, and Israel lies in the eye of the storm.'[41]

In short, the post-Cold War prophecy popularizers of the 1990s overwhelmingly continued their unqualified support for Israel, including the Orthodox religious groups campaigning for a rebuilt Temple, the expansionists who foresee a 'Greater Israel' extending to the boundaries promised to Abraham, and Prime Minister Netanyahu's hard-line opposition to the Oslo Accords. This support was wholly consistent with the prophecy expositors' often-stated view that not only the restoration and survival of Israel, but also its vast future expansion, represent essential steps in the unfolding of God's

prophetic plan, and that unceasing conflict between the Israelis and the Arab states is similarly foreordained, rooted in the enmity that sprang up between two brothers – one the honoured heir, one the outcast – at the very dawn of recorded history.

Welcoming this support, Israeli leaders, especially the conservatives and hard-liners, cultivated US fundamentalists who interpreted Middle Eastern issues according to their Darbyite understanding of Bible prophecy. Apart from the US Jewish community, these groups represented Israel's most un-wavering bloc of support in late-twentieth-century America. A series of fundmentalist leaders and their prophecy-believing followers received red-carpet treatment from high government officials when they visited Israel from the 1960s to the 1990s, and Israeli prime ministers on state visits to America, including Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir and Yitzhak Rabin, were in-variably introduced to prominent US prophecy preachers and writers. When Prime Minister Netanyahu, on his January 1998 US visit, met privately at Washington's Mayflower Hotel with Jerry Falwell (as well as with John Hagee and top Southern Baptist leaders), even before going to the White House, the importance of this link was heavily underscored.

This unlikely alliance could change, of course. Prophetic belief is highly malleable, and should a resurgence of anti-Semitism occur in America, anti-Jewish strands woven through the fabric of prophetic interpretation could certainly be used to buttress such hatreds. The rabid anti-Semitism in medi-eval and early modern Europe that was powerfully reinforced by prophecy belief – and that survived in some twentieth-century prophecy writings – must not be forgotten. Indeed, as noted earlier, anti-Semitism is rife among the virulently racist groups that hover on the far outer fringes of American life, and that ground their hatreds in their own tortuous readings of biblical texts.

At the end of the twentieth century, however, anti-Semitism was markedly absent from the more widely diffused prophecy interpretations – those promulgated in countless pulpits, in the mass-market bookstores and in the electronic media. Indeed, these voices were strongly pro-Israel. For them, the Muslim world and an undifferentiated 'Islam' loomed as the most sinister and satanic actors in the unfolding end-time drama.

The authors are skilled at incorporating contemporary issues that stir deep anxiety in the popular mind. They also showed an intensification of the tendency, underway at least since the runaway success of Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth* in the 1970s, towards a much looser textual grounding, and a much more untethered and freewheeling commentary on current events. They underscored, as well, the tendency of literalistic prophetic belief systems – a tendency much on display during the Cold War – to encourage passivity

and discourage efforts to ameliorate the social problems and international conflicts they so obsessively chronicle. Since these problems and conflicts are integral to an unfolding divine plan, they are not amenable to human inter-vention. They can only be apprehended as parts of a vast prophetic mosaic, and as warning signs of the approaching end. Resolution will come only at the end of time, in an apocalyptic intervention from on high.

Of course, we must be cautious in drawing conclusions about public attitudes and the policymaking process from a merely textual analysis of Bible prophecy expositions. Certainly it would be foolhardy to assume a direct connection between the popularity of these sermons, paperback books and television and radio programmes – as reflected in church-membership figures, aggregate sales figures or audience data – and their effect on the worldview of those exposed to this material. 'Public opinion' is a complex and elusive reality, and is shaped by many sources, of which this essay has examined only one. Yet it would be equally naive to ignore the cumulative impact of a massive outpouring of sermons in thousands of churches across America, scores of magazines, a torrent of prophecy-oriented religious programming on TV and radio, a mountain of audio and video tapes, and a veritable Niagara of mass-market books that cumulatively sell multiplied millions of copies. The prophecy popularizers' worldview, including their understanding of the history and destiny of Israel, the Jews and the Muslim world, unquestionably helps mould the outlook of countless Americans, and thus places important if subtle constraints on US foreign policy in this region of the world. Given the continued high levels of American interest in Bible prophecy, and the centrality of Israel, the Jews and the Arabs in the most widely embraced interpretive system, the importance of these beliefs and their role in in-fluencing views of Middle Eastern affairs seems unlikely to diminish in the foreseeable future.

For many reasons, then, prophecy belief in modern America remains of intense interest, and merits close attention as we attempt to delineate the larger cultural sources of attitudes towards a broad range of contemporary issues – including the upheavals sweeping the Islamic world, the complex internecine tensions within Israel itself, and the tragically protracted conflict in the Middle East.

Notes

Introduction

1. See for example B. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Myth Making in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville, 1992); N. Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven, CT, 1993), esp. chs 4 and 5.

2. For Ann Lee see S. J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America*: *A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven, CT, 1992); for Qurrat al-'Ayn see A. Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850* (Ithaca, NY, 1989), pp. 295–331. For a post-modern but still useful reading of feminine apocalypticism see C. Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then* (Boston, MA, 1996), esp. pp. 224–44.

3. For a relatively recent bibliographical survey of the field see T. Daniel, *Millennialism: An International Bibliography* (New York, 1992). For a general appraisal of the field, C. B. Strozier and M. Flynn (eds), *The Year 2000: Essays on the End* (New York, 1997) and especially B. McGinn, 'Apocalyptic Spirituality: Approaching the Third Millennium', in ibid., pp. 73–80, and more recently R. K. Emmerson, 'The Secret', *American Historical Review*, 104, no. 5 (December 1999): 1603–14 and cited sources. See also B. McGinn, 'Apocalypticism in the Middle Ages: An Historiographical Sketch', *Medieval Studies* 37 (1975): 252–86 and H. Schwartz, 'The End of the Beginning: Millenarian Studies, 1969–1975', *Religious Studies Review* 2, no. 3 (1976): 1–15.

4. With the exception of the above-mentioned volume edited by S. Trupp, the most substantive studies on a comparative basis are David Hellholm (ed.), *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (Tübingen, 1983) which concentrates on the ancient period but excludes Islam, and the more comprehensive and accessible *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed. J. J. Collins, B. McGinn and S. S. Stein, 3 vols (New York, 1998). For a popular survey of the largely Western apocalypticism see D. Thompson, *The End of Time: Faith and Fear in the Shadow of the Millennium* (Hanover, NH, and London, 1996). More recently Eugen Weber's *Apocalypses: Prophecies, Cults, and Millennial Beliefs Through the Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1999) offers a succinct (though at times hurried) overview of Western and largely early modern and modern European apocalypticism.

5. For further discussion of Zoroastrian influence on Jewish apocalyptic see Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos*, esp. ch. 13 and sources cited in n. 1 (263–4); G. Widengren, A. Hultgård and M. Philonenko, *Apocalytique iranienne et dualisme qoumranien* (Paris, 1995); and most recently A. Hultgard, 'Persian Apocalypticism', in J. J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 1, pp. 39–83 and esp. 79–81. See also J. J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London and New York, 1997) pp. 41–51, 99–106.

6. In addition to the literature discussed by Moore, see also Richard Landes, 'The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Millennial Fervor and the Origins of the Modern West', in Strozier and

Flynn (eds), *The Year 2000*, pp. 13–29 and Emmerson, 'The Secret', p. 1604. For a recent survey of European medieval apocalypticism see C. W. Bynum and P. Freedman (eds), *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, PA, 2000), pp. 1–20; and R. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes, 989–1034* (Cambridge, MA, 1995). Articles in this volume address a range of new questions and concerns.

7. Among works cited in Ownby's review of the literature, J. Spence's *God's Chinese Son* (New York, 1996) deserves special mention for its nuanced historical study of the Taiping movement.

8. For discussion of the definitions see E. P. Sanders, 'The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses', in Hellholm (ed.), *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World,* pp. 447–60; Emmerson, 'The Secret', pp. 1609–14.

9. For a general appraisal of methodological issues see for example S. D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*: *A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York and Oxford, 1994), pp. 3–92. For an apocalyptic rereading for early Islam see for example J. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford and New York, 1978), and M. Cook and P. Crone, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*; and *Early Mahdism: Politics and Religion in the Formative Period of Islam* (Leiden, 1985).

10. For an early exposition of this theory see D. Aberle, 'A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory as Applied to Millenarian and Other Cult Movements', in S. Thrupp (ed.), *Millennial Dreams in Action* (The Hague, 1962).

11. For an articulation of the effect of natural disasters and sudden social change in triggering apocalyptic processes see for example M. Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium* (New Haven, CT, 1974) and his more recent *Crucible of the Millennium* (Syracuse, NY, 1986).

12. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*.

13. For the dynamics of Shi'ite apocalypticism see for example Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, pp. 1–29; for an early treatment of Latin American millenarianism see V. Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults*, trans. L. Sergio (London, 1963), pp. 158–95. See also P. Pessar, 'Masking the Politics of Religion: The Case of Brazilian Millenarianism', *Journal of Latin American Lore*, 7 (Winter 1981): 255–77. See also the case study by P. Vanderwood, *The Power of God Against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford, CA, 1998) and A. C. Metcalf, 'Millenarian Slaves? The Santidade de Jaguaripe and Slave Resistance in the Americas', *American Historical Review* 104, no. 5 (December 1999): 1531–59, which also surveys Latin American millennial studies.

1. Mesopotamia and the End of Time

1. Most books on Mesopotamian civilization include an account of the decipherment of cuneiform. One of the most detailed is Sven Pallis, *The Antiquity of Iraq* (Copenhagen, 1956). The best general introduction to ancient Mesopotamian cultures is J. Sasson et al. (eds), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York, 1995). This contains various essays relevant to this study, with good bibliographies.

2. See Larsen in Sasson et al. (eds), *Civilizations*, Vol. 1, pp. 95–106.

3. An influential summary of this view, the antecedents of which need not be sketched here, is S. A. Cook, 'The Semites: Temperament and Thought', in *The Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge, 1929), ch. V.

4. For example, Matthew Arnold, 'Hebraism and Hellenism', in Dwight Cullens (ed.), *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold* (New York, 1961), pp. 165–75; Theodor Benfey, *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft und Orientalische Philologie in Deutschland seit dem Anfange des 19. Jahrhunderts mit einem Rückblick auf die früheren Zeiten* (Munich, 1869), p. 702.

5. J. G. von Herder, *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, trans. James Marsh (Burlington, VT, 1833).

6. Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York, 1948), p. 15: 'ancient Hebrew retained the harshness of the desert, a Bedouin virility marked by staccato tones, vigorous doubled consonants ... and deep-throated, rasping, guttural sounds'.

7. W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, trans. from the German of Caspari, and edited, with Numerous Additions and Corrections (London, 1874) Vol. I, p. ix. Compare Giorgio Levi della Vida, *Les Sémites et leur role dans l'histoire religieuse* (Paris, 1938), p. 35: 'Qui dit Sémite dit donc nomade.'

8. James H. Breasted, 'The Scene of the Evolution of Civilization and the Great White Race', in *The Conquest of Civilization* (New York, 1926), pp. 11–12. The greatest Near Eastern historian of the period, Eduard Meyer, in his *Geschichte des Altertums*, 4th edn (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1921), Vol. I, Part 2, p. 417, finds that 'große selbständige Schöpfungen haben sie [=the Semites] kaum hervorgebracht; und so gut wie gänzlich verschlossen ist ihnen das Gebiet der philosophischen Spekulationen'.

9. For a recent general discussion, see Marc Van de Mieroop, *Cuneiform Texts and the Writing of History* (London, 1999), pp. 111–14.

10. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven, CT, 1993), p. 56. Cohn's preoccupation with 'chaos', a Greek concept he imports into Mesopotamia, seems to me to skew his presentation of Mesopotamian evidence.

11. Wolfram von Soden, 'Die Frage nach der Rechtigkeit Gottes im alten Orient', *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 96 (1965): 41–55, quotation translated from p. 58.

12. J. W. Swain, 'The Theory of the Four Monarchies, Opposition History under the Roman Empire', *Classical Philology* 35 (1940): 1–21.

13. Damian Thompson, *The End of Time: Faith and Fear in the Shadow of the Millennium* (Hanover, NH, 1996); A. A. Vasiliev, 'Medieval Ideas of the End of the World: East and West', *Byzantion* 16 (1942–43): 462–502.

14. Translation by Stanley Burstein, 'The Babyloniaca of Berossus', *Sources and Monographs, Sources for the Ancient Near East* 1, no. 5 (1978): 15, with discussion and references to earlier work.

15. W. G. Lambert, 'Berossus and Babylonian Eschatology', *Iraq* 38 (1976): 171–3.

16. J. J. A. van Dijk, 'Textes divers du Musée du Baghdad', *Sumer* 18 (1962): 29, collected references he took to refer to a 'jour de damnation' in Sumerian literature, but this did not find wide acceptance.

17. A. K. Grayson, 'The Babylonian Origin of Apocalyptic Literature', *Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere et Arti* CXLVIII (1989–90), Classe di Scienze Morali, Lettere ed Arti, 203–21, with earlier bibliography, quoting his translation of the passage.

18. W. G. Lambert, *The Background of Jewish Apocalyptic* (London, 1978). For more on this vast subject, see *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, 1992), s.v. 'Eschatology'.

19. For an introduction, see B. Schmidt, 'Flood Narratives of Ancient Western Asia', in Sasson et al. (eds), *Civilizations*, pp. 2337–52. See also E. A. Speiser, 'The Past as Seen by the Mesopotamians', in Robert C. Dentan (ed.), *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East* (New Haven, CT, 1955), pp. 49–55.

20. This version was included in the Akkadian Epic of Gilgamesh, for which see A. George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh, A New Translation* (London, 1999), pp. 88–95.

21. For a translation and bibliography of the text, see Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses, An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda, MD, 1996), pp. 160–85.

22. Thorkild Jacobsen, 'The Eridu Genesis', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981): 513–29, esp. 520–1.

23. Translation adapted from Bendt Alster, 'Dilmun, Bahrein, and the Alleged Paradise in Sumerian Myth and Literature', in D. Potts (ed.), *Dilmun, New Studies in the Archaeology and*

Early History of Bahrein, Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 2 (Berlin, 1983), pp. 39–74; see p. 58.

24. Stefan M. Maul, 'Zukunftsbewältigung, Eine Untersuchung altorientalischen Denkens anhand der babylonisch-assyrischen Löserituale (Namburbi)', *Baghdader Forschungen* 18 (Mainz, 1994): 3–4.

25. J. J. A. van Dijk, 'Sumerische Religion', in J. Asmussen et al. (eds), *Handbuch der Religionsgeschichte* I (Göttingen, 1971), pp. 440–2.

26. J. Bottéro, *La plus vielle religion en Mésoptamie* (Paris, 1998).

27. W. G. Lambert, 'The Cosmology of Sumer and Babylon', in C. Blacker et al. (eds), *Ancient Cosmologies* (London, 1975), pp. 42–65.

28. W. G. Lambert, 'Enuma Elish', *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, 1992).

29. W. G. Lambert, 'History and the Gods: A Review Article', *Orientalia* 39 (1970): 170–7.

30. Francesca Rochberg-Halton, 'Fate and Divination in Mesopotamia', *Archiv für Orient-forschung*, 19 (1982): 363–71.

31. J. Bottéro, 'Symptômes, signes, écritures', in J. Vernant (ed.), *Divination et rationalité* (Paris, 1974), pp. 70–197.

32. Igor S. Klotchkoff, *Duhovnaja Kul'tura Vavilonii: Chelovek, Sud'ba, Vremja* (Moscow, 1983).

33. Compare George, *Gilgamesh*, p. 95.

34. J. Bottéro, 'The Mythology of Death', in *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*, trans. Zainab Bahrani and Marc Van de Mieroop (Chicago, IL, 1987), pp. 268–86.

35. Foster, *Before the Muses*, p. 722.

36. F. R. Kraus, *Vom mesopotamischen Mensch der altbabylonischen Zeit und seiner Welt*, Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, AFD. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks 36, no. 6 (Amsterdam, 1973).

37. Foster, *Before the Muses*, p. 333.

38. Ibid., pp. 894–5.

39. Compare George, *Gilgamesh*, p. 124.

40. von Soden, 'Die Frage nach der Rechtigkeit'.

41. Foster, *Before the Muses*, p. 801.

2. Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition

Author's Note: I am indebted to Dr A. F. de Jong for reading an earlier draft of this chapter and for his valuable suggestions.

The following abbreviations will be used here: AJ: *Ayadgar i Jamaspig*; Av.: *Avestan*; Dk.: *Denkard*; GBd: *Greater Bundahishn*; Gk.: Greek; Phl.: Pahlavi; Vend: *Vendidad*; Y: *Yasna*; Yt. *Yasht*; Zadspr: *Wizidagiha i Zadsparam*; ZWY: *Zand-i Wahman Yasn*.

1. He played a prominent role in the 'religionsgeschichtliche Schule', see Anders Hultgård, 'Bahman Yasht: A Persian Apocalypse', in J. J. Collins and J. H. Charlesworth (eds), *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium* (Sheffield, 1991), p. 115.

2. R. Reitzenstein, 'Vom Töpferorakel zu Hesrod', in R. Reitzenstein and E. Schaeder (eds), *Studein zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1926).

3. As the status of the account of the metallic ages in the context of Zoroastrian teaching and belief is unknown, and may moreover have changed in the course of time, both 'myth' and 'legend' are here used somewhat loosely when referring to it.

4. See F. Delitzsch, 'Daniel', in *Realencyklopädie fur protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (Berlin, 1855), on which see further Hultgård, 'Bahman', p. 116.

5. Hultgård, 'Bahman', cautiously advances arguments in favour of an ancient Iranian origin of the myth, without further comment on the relative antiquity of this and non-Iranian legends.

6. For arguments in favour of strong Iranian influences in this field see e.g. Mary Boyce, 'On the Antiquity of the Zoroastrian Apocalyptic', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47 (London, 1984): pp. 57–75; Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism,* Vol. 3 (Leiden and New York, 1992); and Hultgård, 'Bahman'. Against, see e.g. Phillipe Gignoux, 'Noveaux regards sur l'apocalyptique iraniene', *Comptes Rendus de l'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (Paris, 1986). C. G. Cereti's *The Zand-i Wahman Yasn: A Zoroastrian Apocalypse* (Rome, 1995) offers a survey of the debate, although the conclusions he draws seem ill-founded.

7. Some scholars insist, for example, on regarding 'eschatology' and 'apocalypticism' as entirely separate phenomena, e.g. Gignoux, 'Noveaux regards', p. 335, whereas the Zoroastrian scriptural tradition consistently presents both as parts of one divinely ordained scheme of things.

8. The term 'Pahlavi' denotes the Middle Persian language as written by Zoroastrians (as opposed to 'Manichaean Middle Persian').

9. The few later accounts clearly depend on the Pahlavi tradition and show no sign of further development.

10. This account is largely based on GBd 1–5, and on the work of Zadsparam, with some reference to the evidence of the ZWY.

11. Iranian names and terms are given here in their simplest form, without length-marks or other special signs.

12. For a further description of this early stage see Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Manchester, 1984), pp. 16–17; Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'Cosmogony and Cosmology in Zoroastrianism/Mazdaism', in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 6, Part 3 (Costa Mesa, 1993), pp. 303–7.

13. See GBd1a.15ff.

14. Zadspr 3.77f.; see also Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'Mithra and Ahreman in Iranian Cosmogonies', in J. R. Hinnells (ed.), *Studies in Mithraism* (Rome, 1994).

15. In later accounts the seventh of these, the 'Beneficent Spirit' (*Spenta Mainyu*) was identified with Ohrmazd himself, so that Ohrmazd became one of the seven; see latterly Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'On Spenta Mainyu's Role in the Zoroastrian Cosmogony', in A. Bromberg (ed.), *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 7 (Bloomfield Hills, 1993).

16. Representing perhaps the need to exercise one's choice by adhering to the power of good.

17. Thus 'Righteousness' has a special link with fire, 'Good Thought' with the animal world, and 'Beneficent Devotion' with the earth.

18. So GBd 1.47–9.

19. GBd 1.23–4 (B. T. Anklesaria, *Zand-Akasih: Iranian or Greater Bundahisn* [Bombay, 1956], p. 45).

20. GBd 3.23–4.

21. See GBd 30 in Anklesaria, *Zand-Akasih*, pp. 256–63. A neutral purgatory (Phl. *hammistagan*, Av. *misvan gatu*) is said to exist for those whose good thoughts, words and actions are entirely balanced by their wicked ones (GBd 30.32–3; for the Avestan term see C. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg, 1904), pp. 1186–7.

22. Stanley Insler, in his *Gathas of Zarathustra* (Tehran and Liège, 1975) translates Av. *frasha-* as 'healed, renovated', which yields admirable sense; against this interpretation see, however, H.-P. Schmidt, *Indo-Iranian Journal* 21 (Dordrecht, 1979): 97–8.

23. GBd 34.36–8. The term 'essence' translates Phl. *xwarnah*, a complex concept concerned with light, glory and, probably, fertility.

24. See GBd 34 in Anklesaria, *Zand-Akasih*, pp. 283–93.

25. There are some exceptions; thus the *Ayadgar i Jamaspig* (27.3; in G. S. I. Messina, *Libro Apocalittico Persiano Ayatkar i Zamaspik* [Rome, 1939], p. 119) implies that the first of Zarathustra's future sons, Ushedar, will be succeeded by Ushedarmah after 500 years.

26. On the earlier non-Iranian sources see further below. On the late origin of the idea of a 'spiritual ideal' stage see Kreyenbroek, '*Spenta Mainyu*'. Against the notion that such variations reflect deeper doctrinal differences see A. F. De Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden, New York and Cologne, 1997), p. 200, n. 160.

27. GBd 1.14.

28. GBd 1.28.

29. GBd 1.37ff; 3.2.

30. GBd 1.53; cf. 3.12ff.

31. GBd 1a.

32. GBd 1.47ff.

33. GBd 3.23

34. See GBd 33.1–11.

35. Such legends were later described in detail in Ferdowsi's *Shahnama*.

36. GBd 32.13–30; AJ 15.3–28.

37. GBd 32.27; ZWY 81–5. On Wahram see further below.

38. For this interpretation of Phl. '*syn QDM gwmyht*', see Gignoux, 'Nouveaux regards'.

39. The four ages are mentioned in *Zand-i Wahman Yasn* 1; the seven in ZWY 3. For a survey of further Zoroastrian sources where the two version of this legend (with four and seven ages respectively) occur, see Boyce, 'Antiquity'.

40. For a survey of the legends surrounding Zarathustra's three saviour-sons, see H. G. Kippenberg, 'Die Geschicte der Mittelpersischen apokalyptischen Traditionen', *Studia Iranica* 7 (Paris, 1978): 54.

41. See GBd 33.29–31. Mention is also made (GBd 33.30) of the return of some of the men and animals who have been sheltered from the beginning of time in the mythical *war* (enclosure) of Yima.

42. ZWY 9.8.

43. So ZWY 9.11.

44. So ZWY 9.13–23, similarly GBd 33.34–5, where raising Keresasp from the dead is said to have been Saoshyant's first act of resurrection.

45. The process is described clearly and elaborately in GBd 33.

46. *Pace* J. Kellens and E. Pirart, *Les textes vieil-avestiques* (Wiesbaden, 1988), it is assumed here that the author of the *Gathas* was indeed a historical person called Zarathustra.

47. See Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'On the Shaping of Zoroastrian Theology: Ashi, Verethraghna and the Amesha Spentas', in P. Bernard and F. Grenet (eds), *Histoire et Cultes de l'Asie Centrale* (Paris, 1991).

48. See Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism,* Vol. 2 (Leiden and Cologne, 1982), pp. 7–9.

49. While there is general agreement that the later Achaemenians were Zoroastrians, there is still some debate as to when and how Zoroastrianism came to be established in western Iran. The best-founded and most likely view, however, is that the Achaemenians were already Zoroastrians when they came to power. See Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. 1 (Leiden, 1975), pp. 41ff.

50. For a more detailed account see Philip G. Kreyenbroek, 'The Zoroastrian Tradition

from an Oralist's Point of View', in B. S. Desai and J. J. Modi (eds), *K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, Second International Congress Proceedings* (Bombay, 1996).

51. A later tradition, purporting that two copies of the entire Avesta had been written down but were subsequently destroyed by Alexander the Macedonian (see Boyce, *Textual Sources*), can safely be regarded as a myth.

52. There is a rigid division in Zoroastrianism between priestly and lay families.

53. See P. G. Kreyenbroek, 'The Dadestan i Denig on Priests', *Indo-Iranian Journal* 30 (Dordrecht, 1987).

54. See Kreyenbroek, 'Zoroastrian Tradition'.

55. Whence the expression 'Zend-Avesta', which is sometimes used as a synonym of Avesta.

56. See Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, p. 81.

57. Ibid., pp. 111ff., and especially p. 114.

58. It is possible that this process was completed during the reign of Khusraw I (531–578), see M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (Boston, 1979), p. 135.

59. See e.g. the oeuvre of M. Boyce, and Philip G. Kreyenbroek, *Sraosha in the Zoroastrian Tradition* (Leiden, 1985).

60. Translation H. Humbach, *The Gathas of Zarathustra and Other Old Avestan Texts*, 2 vols (Heidelberg, 1991), p. 131.

61. Translation Humbach, *Gathas*, p. 170. Humbach, however, translates Av. *cinuuato perequm* as 'the account keeper's bridge'.

62. i.e., presumably, for all time until the Renovation, see below.

63. cf. Humbach, *Gathas*, p. 46; Insler, *Gathas*, p. 83.

64. On this see also Y 30.4.

65. Translation Insler, *Gathas*, p. 105. Further passages where fire is mentioned in this context include Y 31.3; 47.1

66. Translation Insler, *Gathas*, p. 61.

67. Ibid., p. 35.

68. Y 34.15: 'By your rule, Lord, Thou shalt truly heal this world (*ferashem-dafi*) in accord with your wish'. See Insler, *Gathas*, p. 59.

69. So Bartholomae, *Wörterbuch*, p. 1561; cf. H. Lommel, *Die Religion Zarathustras: Nach Dem Avesta Dargestell* (Tübingen, 1930), pp. 226ff.

70. Insler, *Gathas*, p. 81, n. 2.

71. Translation Insler, *Gathas*, p. 93.

72. Two further verses, Y 34.13; 53.2, refer to the *daena* of the *sayoshyant*; the precise meaning of the term *daena* is debated, and the passages do not appear to throw light on the present discussion.

73. Lommel, *Religion*, p. 226 defines the meaning of the term as: 'who in future will accomplish the activity denoted by *su*'. This still implies, however, that the event will be achieved by the Saoshyant during his lifetime.

74. This is suggested by Boyce in 'Antiquity', who argues that this realization led Zarathustra to postulate that another, greater Saoshyant would come after him. The *Gathas* appear to offer no evidence of this, however, and the later tradition frequently uses the word 'saoshyant' in the plural, possibly to describe the entire membership of the congregation (Y 14.1; 61.5; 70.4; Visperd 11.13). This suggests that the term continued to be used in a non-specific sense until a relatively late date. See further below.

75. cf. such terms as 'the final turning point of creation' (Y 43.5).

76. In other non-Gathic passages the word is used to refer to 'us', i.e. to members of the community generally (Y 14.1; 61.5; 70.4); to an indefinite number of figures qualified by

adjectives suggesting a connection with *Frashegerd* (Y 12.7; 24.5; Yt 13.17, 38; 19.22); and to a single saviour (Y 26.10; 59.28; Vend 19.5).

77. With minor alterations, the translation is that of Boyce, 'Antiquity'.

78. So all MSS (K. F. Geldner, *Avesta: The Sacred Books of the Parsis*, 3 vols (Stuttgart, 1896), Vol. 2, p. 256), and also A. Hintze, *Der Zamyad Yast* (Wiesbaden, 1994), p. 365. Boyce, 'Antiquity', p. 58, emends the genitive plural form to the accusative singular and translates 'the victorious Saoshyant'.

79. i.e. 'he who embodies truth', the name of the final saviour, which derives from a Gathic passage (Y 43.16), see Boyce, 'Antiquity', pp. 57–8.

80. i.e., his mother, whose name means 'who shall overcome all'.

81. The passage is followed by an account of the final battle between good and evil forces (Yt 19.95–6).

82. Here follows a corrupt passage.

83. For this translation see H. Humbach, *Indogermanische Forschungen* 63 (Berlin, 1957): 43, n. 7.

84. This section is preceded by an apparently unrelated text dealing with geographical topics (Yt 19.1–8).

85. His name further occurs in Yt 13.110, 117, 128, as part of lists of venerable figures.

86. See W. W. Malandra, *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religions: Readings from the Avesta and the Achaemenid Inscriptions* (Minneapolis, MN, 1983), p. 145.

87. Av. *savayat*, from the same root as the word *saoshyant*.

88. Av. *astvat*.

89. On this subject cf. M. V. Cerutti, *Antropologia e apocalittica* (Rome, 1990).

90. See Boyce, *History*, Vol. 1, pp. 186, 188.

91. His name occurs in Yt 13.98; Y 26.5; 23.2. On Zarathustra's three 'naturally-born' sons, see further below.

92. For a more detailed discussion of this figure see Boyce, *Antiquity*, p. 59–67.

93. Boyce, 'Antiquity', p. 67.

94. See above. For a survey of sources mentioning 9,000 and 12,000 years respectively, see R. C. Zaehner, *Zurvan: A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 96–7. Zaehner's conclusions from these data, however, would now be regarded as outdated.

95. See e.g. Boyce, *History*, Vol. 2, pp. 234ff. Boyce strongly links the development of these ideas with the Babylonian concept of a 'great year', the period of time it would take all heavenly bodies to complete the full cycle of their movements. In her earlier work, *History*, Vol. 1, p. 234, Boyce claims that 'in every "Great Year" the events of the preceding "Great Years" were thought to be exactly repeated, to infinity'. However, she later qualified this view by admitting that 'no trace ... of a theory of recurrent cycles of events has been found in Babylonian cuneiform texts' (Boyce, 'Antiquity', p. 67, n. 77), and suggested that 'this was possibly a development of Hellenistic times'. For an alternative explanation see below.

96. See e.g. the accounts of Eznik of Kolb and Theodore bar Konay in Zaehner, *Zurvan*, pp. 420ff.

97. Such as the notion of a god greater than Ohrmazd and the implication that Ohrmazd and Ahriman have the same origin.

98. Boyce, *History*, Vol. 2, p. 236.

99. S. Shaked, 'The Myth of Zurvan: Cosmogony and Eschatology', in I. Gruenwald, S. Shaked and G. G. Stroumsa (eds), *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity Presented to David Flusser* (Tübingen, 1992), p. 232.

100. See e.g. my remarks on Yezidism in *Yezidism: Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition* (Lewiston, 1995), pp. 19–20.

101. So De Jong, *Traditions*, pp. 164–5, on the basis of the translation by J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride* (Cardiff, 1970).

102. Boyce, 'Antiquity', p. 67, n. 77.

103. The details of Plutarch's story do not correspond exactly with those found in the Pahlavi tradition, but it seems likely that, while the division into three or four periods of 3,000 years was widely accepted, various speculative traditions existed among Zoroastrians as to the precise sequence of events (see e.g. S. Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of Religion in Sasanian Iran* [London, 1994]).

104. See Zaehner, *Zurvan*, pp. 419ff.

105. So Boyce, *Textual Sources*, p. 97.

106. Translation by Boyce, *Textual Sources*, p. 97.

107. For a survey of the variations reported by later Arabic accounts see S. Shaked, 'Some Islamic Reports Concerning Zoroastrianism', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 17 (Jerusalem, 1994): 43–84.

108. Yt 3.98; GBd 35.56; the latter passage is followed by a reference to the 'miraculously-born' sons in GBd 35.59.

109. See Boyce and Grenet, *History*, Vol. 3, pp. 376ff.

110. On this process, which often plays a role in the shaping of oral history, see J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition and History* (London, 1985), p. 168.

111. Ibid., pp. 168–9.

112. See e.g. Boyce, *Textual Sources*, p. 3.

113. Gignoux, 'Nouveaux Regards', p. 339; this account of the relationship between the two texts was first proposed by J. Duchesne-Guillemin, 'Apocalypse juive et apocalypse iranienne', in U. Bianchi and M. J. Vermaseren (eds), *La Soteriologia dei Culti Orientali nell'impero Romano* (Leiden, 1982).

114. On this subject see also the work of David Flusser.

115. Hultgård, 'Bahman Yasht', p. 132.

116. For further reasons for dismissing this idea see Boyce, 'Antiquity', pp. 70–1.

117. On the date of the Book of Daniel see Boyce and Grenet, *History*, Vol. 3, p. 401.

118. Boyce, 'Antiquity', p. 74.

119. 'Apocalyptic' in her work (Boyce, 'Antiquity', p. 57) is defined as 'another word for "revelation"', and it is stressed that no essential distinction exists in Zoroastrianism between prophecy and apocalyptic.

3. The Biblical Roots of Apocalyptic

1. Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (London, 1972), pp. 36–97; Walter Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement* (Nashville, TN, 1975); Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, PA, 1975), pp. 1–31.

2. See Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*; John J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London, 1997); John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, OH, 1998); John J. Collins, 'From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End', in John J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 1 (New York, 1997); Stephen L. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism* (Minneapolis, MN, 1995).

3. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp. 1–19.

4. Robert Wilson, 'From Prophecy to Apocalyptic: Reflections on the Shape of Israelite Religion', *Semeia* 21 (1981): 79–95; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp. 37–8. See also Cook, *Prophecy*, pp. 19–54.

5. See Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*.

6. Cook, *Prophecy*, pp. 12–54.

7. See Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT, 1983).

8. John J. Collins, 'The Jewish Apocalypses', *Semeia* 14 (1979): 21–59.

9. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, pp. 1–31.

10. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp. 11–12.

11. Andres Hultgård, 'Persian Apocalypticism', in J. J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 1, pp. 39–83; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp. 29–37; see also Mary Boyce, 'Persian Religion in the Achemenid Age', in W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (eds), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1984).

12. Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelpia, PA, 1984), pp. 119–23; William W. Hallo, 'Akkadian Apocalypses', *Israel Exploration Journal* 16 (1966): 231–42; Tremper Longman, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography* (Winona Lake, IN, 1991).

13. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp. 26–9.

14. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, pp. 124–8; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp. 33–7.

15. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp. 23–5.

16. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*.

4. Eschatalogical Dynamics and Utopian Ideals in Early Judaism

1. On the early scholarship on the subject see J. M. Schmidt, *Die hidische Apokalyptik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969); P. D. Hanson, 'Prolegomena to the Study of Jewish Apocalyptic', in F. M. Cross et al. (eds), *Munalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God* (Garden City, NY, 1976), pp. 389–413.

2. F. Lücke, *Versuch einer vollstandigen Einleitung in die Offenbarung iohannis und in die gesamte apokalyptische Literatur* (Bonn, 1832).

3. R. Laurence, *The Book of Enoch the Prophet* (Oxford, 1921).

4. E.g. F. D. Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source Critical Perspective* (BZNW 54; Berlin, 1989).

5. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1913).

6. H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (London, 1944).

7. See e.g. O. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology* (Richmond, VA, 1968).

8. P. D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, PA, 1975).

9. G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Vol. 2* (4th edn, Munich, 1965).

10. So R. E. Sturm, 'Defining the Word "Apocalyptic": A Problem in Biblical Criticism', in J. Marcus and M. L. Soards (eds), *Apocalyptic and the New Testament* (*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Supplement 24; Sheffield, 1989), pp. 17–48.

11. K. Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (Naperville and London, 1972).

12. J. J. Collins (ed.), *Apocalypse. The Morphology of a Genre* (*Semeia* 14; Missoula, MT, 1979).

13. J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, MI, 1998).

14. J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols (New York, 1983, 1985).

15. D. Hellholm (ed.), *Apocalypticism in the Hellenistic World and the Near East* (Tübingen, 1983).

16. J. J. Collins, B. McGinn and S. Stein (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, 3 vols (New York, 1998). Vol. I deals with apocalypticism in the ancient world.

17. This point was emphasized by M. E. Stone, 'Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature', in F. M. Cross et al. (eds), *Magnalia Dei. The Mighty Acts of God. Essays in Memory of G. E. Wright* (Garden City, NY, 1976), pp. 414–54; and C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven* (New York, 1982).

18. See Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*; S. L. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism. The Post-Exilic Social Setting* (Minneapolis, MN, 1995).

19. H. S. Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man* (WMANT 61; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1988).

20. J. G. Griffiths, *The Divine Verdict: A Study of Divine Judgment in the Ancient Religions* (Leiden, 1991).

21. H. Cancik, 'The End of the World, of History, and of the Individual in Greek and Roman Antiquity', in J. J. Collins (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*. Vol. 1, pp. 84–125.

22. A. Hultgård, 'Persian Apocalypticism', in J. J. Collins (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*. Vol. 1, pp. 39–83.

23. A Hultgård, 'Bahman Yasht: A Persian Apocalypse', in J. J. Collins and J. H. Charlesworth (eds), *Mysteries and Revelations. Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium* (*Journal for the Study of Pseudepigraphia*, Supplement 9; Sheffield, 1991), pp. 114–34.

24. See J. J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Minneapolis, MN, 1993), pp. 163–5.

25. G. Widengren, A. Hultgård, M. Philonenko, *Apocalyptique iranienne et dualisme qoumranien* (Paris, 1995); J. J. Collins, 'The Origin of Evil in Apocalyptic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls', in *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 287–99.

26. P. Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and Its History* (Sheffield, 1996).

27. For a maximalist reading of the evidence see E. Puech, *La Croyance des Esseniens en la vie future: immortalité, résurrection, vie éternelle* (Paris, 1993), pp. 33–98.

28. Collins, *Daniel*, p. 395. For the interpretation of Isaiah 26: 19 as referring to individual resurrection see Puech, *La Croyance des Esseniens*, pp. 66–73.

29. M. Himmelfarb, 'Revelation and Rapture: The Transformation of the Visionary in the Ascent Apocalypses', in Collins and Charlesworth (eds), *Mysteries and Revelations*, pp. 79–90.

30. See J. Licht, 'Taxo, or the Apocalyptic Doctrine of Divine Vengeance', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 12 (1961): 95–103.

31. Collins (ed.), *Apocalypse*.

32. E. P. Sanders, 'The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses', in Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism*, pp. 447–59.

33. Cf. A. Yarbro Collins, 'Introduction: Early Christian Apocalypticism', in *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting* (*Semei* 36; Atlanta, GA, 1986), p. 7; D. E. Aune, 'The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre', in ibid., p. 87; D. Hellholm, 'The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John', in ibid., p. 27.

34. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism,* pp. 123–65.

35. A. I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 152–95.

36. Aune, 'The Apocalypse of John', p. 87.

37. For a fuller discussion, see J. J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London and New York, 1997).

38. See J. J. Collins, 'Teacher and Messiah? The One Who Will Teach Righteousness at the End of Days', in E. Ulrich and J. VanderKam (eds), *The Community of the Renewed Covenant* (Notre Dame, IN, 1994), pp. 193–210.

39. *Pace* G. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1998).

40. On the messianic expectations in the Scrolls see J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star* (New York, 1975); J. H. Charlesworth, H. Lichtenberger and G. S. Oegema, *Qumran-Messianism* (Tübingen, 1998); and J. Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran* (WUNT 104; Tübingen, 1998).

41. S. Talmon, 'Waiting for the Messiah at Qumran', in *The World of Qumran from Within* (Leiden, 1989) pp. 273–300.

42. C. A. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* (Atlanta, GA, 1985).

43. The primary document here is 1QS, The Rule of the Community. See now P. S. Alexander and G. Vermes, *Qumran Cave 4. XIX. Serekh ha-Yahad and Two Related Texts* (DJD 26; Oxford, 1998).

44. T. S. Beall, *Josephus' Description of the Essenes Illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Cambridge, 1998); J. J. Collins, 'Essenes', in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, 1992) 2.619–26; J. C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids, MI and London, 1994) pp. 71–98.

45. See J. M. Baumgarten, 'The Qumran–Essene Restraints on Marriage', in L. H. Schiffman (ed.), *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigael Yadin* (*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigraphia*, Supplement 8; Sheffield, 1990) pp. 13–24.

46. J. M. Baumgarten, *Qumran Cave IV. XIII. The Damascus Document* (4Q266–273) (DJD XVIII; Oxford, 1996) p. 163.

47. On the importance of the angelic world in this literature see M. Mach, 'From Apocalypticism to Early Jewish Mysticism', in Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*. Vol. 1, pp. 229–64.

48. For the following, cf. J. J. Collins, 'From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End', in Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*. Vol. 1, pp. 151–6; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp. 194–225.

49. M. E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Minneapolis, MN, 1990).

50. E. Brandenburger, *Die Verborgenheit Gottes im WeltReschehen* (Zurich, 1981), pp. 42–51; W. Harnisch, *Verhangnis und Verheissung der Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1969), pp. 60–7.

51. M. E. Stone, 'On Reading an Apocalypse', in Collins and Charlesworth (eds), *Mysteries and Revelations*, pp. 65–78.

52. M. A. Knibb, 'Apocalyptic and Wisdom in 4 Ezra', *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 113 (1983): 56–74.

53. The best commentary on 2 Baruch is that of P. Bogaert, *Apocalypse de Baruch*, 2 vols (Paris, 1969).

54. See especially D. C. Harlow, *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch) in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden, 1996).

55. M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadelphia, PA, 1974) Vol. 1, pp. 2–10.

56. See further J. J. Collins, 'Cosmos and Salvation. Jewish Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Hellenistic Age', in *Seers, Sibyls and Sages*, pp. 317–38.

5. The Messiah and the Millennium

The following abbreviations will be used here: *Ant.*: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*; *IQPHab: The Pesher Habakkuk*; *IQS*: Scroll of the Rock; *War*: Josephus, *The Jewish War*.

1. Even though the figure on the white horse is not entitled the Christ or the Messiah, his identity is transparent.

2. Attempts to date the Book of Revelation range from the late 60s of the first century to the mid-90s. For our purposes greater precision than that date range is not necessary.

3. See most recently David E. Aune, *Revelation*, 3 vols (Dallas, TX, 1997–98).

4. For treatments of the Maccabean revolt, see the standard historical surveys: Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, 3 vols, rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, et al. (Edinburgh, 1973–87); Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishna* (Philadelphia, PA, 1987); Lester Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, 2 vols (Minneapolis, MN, 1992); Peter Schäfer, *The History of the Jews in Antiquity: The Jews of Palestine from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (New York, 1995); or the more specialized studies of Viktor T. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (New York, 1970); Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *Judas Maccabaeus: The Jewish Struggle against the Seleucids* (Cambridge, 1989); Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Berkeley, CA, 1990) pp. 497–524; Doron Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* (New York, 1992); Joseph Sievers, *The Hasmoneans and Their Supporters* (Atlanta, GA, 1990).

5. See John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Minneapolis, MN, 1993).

6. The ultimate model is Joseph in Genesis, but the tale was oft told. See Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends* (Minneapolis, MN, 1990); Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley, CA, and London, 1998).

7. This epithet reflects the fact that Antiochus IV seized control of the kingdom from his brother Seleucus IV.

8. On the identity of the 'holy ones', see Collins, *Daniel*, pp. 313–17.

9. The major source for the period is the account in 1 Maccabees. For detailed commentaries see Jonathan A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees* (New York, 1976); *2 Maccabees* (New York, 1983).

10. See, e.g., the eulogy of the Hasmonean high priest (142–135) Simon, brother of Judas, 1 Maccabees 14: 4–15.

11. Josephus, *The Jewish War* (hereafter *War*) 1.68; *Jewish Antiquities* (hereafter *Ant.*) 13.299. On the royal status of Hyrcanus, Josephus reports (*War* 70; *Ant.* 13.301) that it was Aristobulus (105–104), son of Hyrcanus, who first assumed the title of 'king'. Strabo 16.2.40 attributes the innovation that it was his successor, Alexander Jannaeus (104–78) who first assumed the title.

12. It is interesting that 2 Maccabees is silent on the claims of the line, and may be written by opponents of the Hasmoneans.

13. See Josephus, *War* 1.88–98; *Ant.* 13.372–83.

14. For general introductions to the literature, see Hartmut Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran* (Leiden, New York and Köln, 1998); James VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids, MI, and London, 1994), and Peter Flint and James VanderKam (eds), *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment: Vol. I* (Leiden, Boston and Cologne, 1998). There is not universal agreement on the identification of the sect of the Scrolls with the Essenes. For expressions of doubt, see Shemaryahu Talmon, in various publications, including 'The Essential "Community of the Renewed Covenant": How Should Qumran Studies Proceed?', in Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger and Peter Schäfer (eds), *Geschichte–Tradition–Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag*, 3 vols (Tübingen, 1996), Vol. 1, pp. 323–52. Emphasizing Sadducean elements is Lawrence H. Schiffmann, *The Eschatological*

Community of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Atlanta, GA, 1989). Sceptical of any sectarian connection is Norman Golb, 'The Problem of the Origin and Identification of the Dead Sea Scrolls', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 124 (1980): 1–24, and 'The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Perspective', *American Scholar* 58 (1989): 177–207.

15. For a collection of the most important passages see T. S. Beall, *Josephus' Description of the Essenes Illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Cambridge, 1988).

16. See *The Pesher Habakkuk*, an interpretation of the prophet Habakkuk as a set of predictions of events in the life of the sect. *1QPHab* 8.7–13 describes the Wicked Priest, variously identified with one of the Hasmoneans, but most likely Jonathan (161–43): 'when he ruled over Israel his heart became conceited, he deserted God and betrayed the laws for the sake of riches. And he stole and hoarded wealth from the brutal men who had rebelled against God. And he seized public money, incurring additional serious sin. And he performed repulsive acts of every type of filthy licentiousness.' For translations of the Scrolls, see Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd edn (Leiden, New York, Cologne and Grand Rapids, MI, 1996), p. 200. (Note, the Scrolls are conventionally listed by the number of the cave at Qumran or any other site where they were found, then by title or number.)

17. Again *1QPHab* 11.4–8 (García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, pp. 201–2), describes a confrontation between the Wicked Priest and the Teacher of Righteousness, a revered figure in the history of the sect, which presumes that they celebrated the most holy festival of the Day of Atonement according to different calendars.

18. The most important text is from the *Scroll of the Rule* (hereafter *1QS*), a basic set of guidelines for the life and belief of the community. *1QS* 9:11 reads: 'They shall depart from none of the counsels of the Law to walk in the stubbornness of their hearts, but shall be ruled by the primitive precepts in which the men of the community were first instructed until there shall come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.' For debates about this and related passages, see John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star* (New York, 1995), pp. 74–101. See also Lawrence H. Schiffman, 'Messianic Figures and Ideas in the Qumran Scrolls', in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN, 1992), pp. 116–29. For a survey of other opinions on the evidence of the scrolls, see Adam S. van der Woude, 'Fifty Years of Qumran Research', in Flint and VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years*, pp. 1–45, esp. 38–9; and Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint (eds), *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1997).

19. Other scrolls alluding to this figure include several recently published texts, such as *4Q285*. For discussion, see Collins, *Sceptre*, pp. 56–73. The translation of this text has occasioned considerable controversy. It now seems clear that it refers not to a messiah who is slain, but a warrior messiah who slays his enemies.

20. Hopes in a messiah in the line of David rest ultimately on the promise in the oracle of the prophet Nathan at 2 Samuel 7: 13, that God would establish an eternal Davidic dynasty, an oracle convenient for the political interests of the Davidic house in the kingdom of Judah. The fall and disappearance of the dynasty eventually led to hopes in its restoration, in fulfilment of that promise. Such hopes are graphically portrayed in Psalm 89, which appeals to the divine promise (Psalm 89: 29), takes the fall of the house as a divine judgment against it (v. 38), and pleads for divine restoration (vv. 46–51).

21. The interest in a 'priestly' messiah is also found in Jewish documents of the period interested in the Biblical figure of Levi, such as *Jubilees and Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. See Collins, *Scepter*, pp. 83–101.

22. A text related to the community rule, *1QSa* 2:11–22 (García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, pp. 201–2), describes what may be an ideal future banquet or its ritual anticipation: 'This is the assembly of famous men, [those summoned to] the gathering of the community council, when [God] begets the Messiah with them. [The] chief [priest] of all the congregation of Israel shall enter, and all [his brothers, the son] of Aaron, the priests

[summoned] to the assembly, the famous men, and they shall sit befo[re him, each one] according to his dignity. After, [the Me]ssiah of Israel shall ent[er] and before him shall sit the chiefs [of the clans of Israel, each] one according to his dignity.'

23. For the biblical imagery, see Isaiah 11: 1; Jeremiah 23: 5; 33: 15. Among the Scrolls see *4Q285*, *4Q174*, *4Q252*, discussed in Collins, *Scepter*, pp. 60–3.

24. See Collins, *Scepter*, pp. 63–4.

25. The major evidence is a fragmentary text, *11QMelchizedek* describing the activities of a heavenly figure, one of the 'holy ones of God', 'standing in the midst of gods'. See Paul Kobielski, *Melchizedek and Melchiresac* (Washington, DC, 1981) pp. 3–23 for text and discussion. See also García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, pp. 139–40.

26. See Leviticus 25: 8–55.

27. The *War Scroll* (García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, pp. 95–125) graphically describes the decisive final conflict anticipated between the forces of good and evil.

28. *Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice* (García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, pp. 419–31), on which see Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* (Atlanta, GA, 1985).

29. For the period in general, see E. S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (Berkeley, CA, 1984), and Green, *Alexander to Actium*, pp. 547–65.

30. Diplomatic contacts between the Hasmoneans and Rome, as well as other Hellenistic states, particularly Sparta, began under Jonathan, high priest 161–43 BCE, according to Maccabbees 11: 74 and 12: 6, Josephus, *Ant.* 13.163–70. Hyrcanus (135–104 BCE) renewed the alliance. See Josephus, *Ant.* 13.259–66.

31. For Pompey's violation, cf. Josephus, *War* 1.152; *Ant.* 14.34–76, esp. 72, although in both accounts Josephus portrays a reverential Pompey. For the ritual, cf. Leviticus 16: 11–14.

32. R. B. Wright, 'Psalms of Solomon', in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 2 vols (Garden City, NY, 1985), pp. 638–70.

33. This language, from Psalm 2: 9, will appear again in Revelation 2: 27; 12: 5, and in the passage noted at the beginning of this essay, Revelation 19: 15.

34. Another biblical image found, e.g., in Isaiah 49: 2, will also characterize the 'Son of Man' of Revelation 1: 16; 2:12; 19:15.

35. See Josephus, *War* 1.204–11; *Ant.* 14.156–84. Whether the Galilean 'bandits' had any political affiliation with the Hasmoneans is debated. Sean Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323 BCE to 135 CE: A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (Wilmington, IN, 1980), pp. 63, 93, n. 20; Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia, PA, 1988), argues in favour of such an affiliation. Richard Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, PA, 1995), pp. 260–3, 347 n. 10, is properly sceptical, judging Hezekiah to be an example of social banditry.

36. Josephus, *War* 1.387–97; *Ant.* 15.183–201.

37. See Josephus, *War* 1.401–21; *Ant.* 15.380–425. For an assessment of Herod's building activity, see Peter Richardson, *Herod, King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Columbia, SC, 1996), pp. 174–215.

38. Josephus, *War* 1.422–8; *Ant.* 15.326–41.

39. His wife Mariamme, Josephus, *War* 1.443–4; *Ant.* 15.232–6; his sons Alexander and Aristobulus, *War* 1.559–60; *Ant.* 16.392–4, and finally his son Antipater, *War* 1.663; *Ant.* 17.187.

40. Josephus, *Ant.* 17.42–5. See Richard A. Horsley and John Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA, 1999), p. 108.

41. Josephus, *Ant.* 17.45.

42. Another major disturbance involved the attempt to remove a golden eagle from the temple, instigated by two teachers of the Law, Judas son of Sepphoraeus and Matthias (Josephus, *War* 1.648–50; *Ant.* 17.149–63).

43. See Josephus, *Ant.* 17.271–2. A briefer account appears at *War* 2.56. For these and the other post-Herodian disturbances, see Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs*, pp. 112–17.

44. Josephus, *Ant.* 17.273–6.

45. Josephus, *Ant.* 17.278–80.

46. Cf. Luke 2: 1, where it occurs before the death of Herod, at least ten years too early. For discussion see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2 vols (Garden City, NY, 1981–85) Vol. 1, pp. 399–405.

47. Josephus, *War* 2.118.

48. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.4. He is also mentioned in the New Testament at Acts 5: 37, which reports his death and the dispersal of his followers. His relationship to the Judas of Galilee, son of Ezekias, who staged a revolt upon the death of Herod, is unclear.

49. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.23.

50. See the important work by Martin Hengel, *Die Zeloten: Untersuchungen zur jüdischen Freiheitsbewegung in der Zeit von Herodes I. bis 70 n. Chr.* (Leiden, 1961); translated as *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.* (Edinburgh, 1989).

51. See Josephus, *War* 2.168, 182–3; *Ant.* 18.36–8, 104–42, 240–58, and Harold Horner, *Herod Antipas: A Contemporary of Jesus Christ* (Cambridge, 1972; reprinted Grand Rapids, MI, 1980).

52. See Josephus, *Ant.* 18.106.

53. Pilate met resistance to his attempt to introduce Roman military standards, with their idolatrous images, into Jerusalem, and aroused resentment by using temple funds to construct an aqueduct. Cf. Josephus, *War* 2.269–74; *Ant.* 18.55–62. While these episodes reveal resentment at Roman control, they do not indicate organized resistance or activity associated with any messianic figure. It is interesting that in the *Antiquities*, Josephus follows this report with his account of Jesus, *Ant.* 18.63–4. The authenticity of the passage has long been debated, but it is probably Josephan, with a few Christian touches. For a review of the issues, see John Meier, 'Jesus in Josephus, a Modest Proposal', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990): 76–103.

54. The bibliography on the subject is vast and ever expanding. For some of the most important recent contributions see Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (San Francisco, CA, 1994); John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus,* 3 vols (Garden City, NY, 1992); John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (New York, 1991). For reviews of the debates see Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (Leiden, 1994); and, more pointedly, Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco, CA, 1996). On the specific issue of this paper, see James D. G. Dunn, 'Messianic Ideas and Their Influence on the Jesus of History', in Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, pp. 365–81.

55. This is the lesson of Albert Schweizer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, introduction by James M. Robinson (New York, 1968: original German 1906).

56. Psalm 44: 4; 99: 1–5; 149: 2.

57. Psalm 22: 28; 47: 1–9; 67: 24–31; 103: 19.

58. Psalm 8: 1–9; 19: 1–6; 29: 1–11; 93: 1–5; 95: 3–7; 145: 1–13.

59. Psalm 9: 7–8; 22: 3–5; 33: 13–22; 45: 6; 96: 10–13; 99: 4.

60. Psalm 1: 1–3; 14: 1–7; 15: 1–5; 84: 3–12; 145: 13–20.

61. Psalm 96: 10–13 emphasizes the coming of God as king to judge to earth. Matthew's version of Jesus' teaching is particularly fond of the theme of coming judgment. Cf. Matthew 10: 15; 11: 22, 24; 12: 18, 20, 36, 41, 42; 23: 23, 33; and the graphic portrait of the final assize

in Matthew 25: 31–46, with the 'son of Man' as judge. Lukan texts referring to a judgment (Luke 10: 14; 11: 30–1) are probably closer to the teaching of Jesus himself.

62. Luke 17: 21. The 'nature' parables, e.g., the mustard seed (Matthew 13: 31–2; Mark 4: 30–2; Luke 12: 18–19), and parables of hidden things (Matthew 13: 44–50) probably make a similar point.

63. For the core teachings of Jesus and their embodiment in the great Sermon of Matthew 5–7, see Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis, MN, 1995).

64. Those who view Jesus as a 'Cynic' accurately capture this dimension of his proclamation, whether or not he was associated with the counter-cultural preachers of Greek popular philosophy. See Francis Gerald Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh, 1992); Leif Vaage, *Galilean Upstarts: Jesus' First Followers According to Q* (Valley Forge, PA, 1994).

65. Cf. Matthew 5: 21–6. On the general political context, see Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (eds), *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (Cambridge, 1984). On the political context of Jesus designation of God as Father, see Mary Rose D'Angelo, 'Theology in Mark and Q: *Abba* and "Father" in Context', *Harvard Theological Review* 85 (1992): 149–74, and 'Abba and "Father": Imperial Theology and the Traditions about Jesus', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111 (1992): 611–30. For his programme of non-violence and its specific Galilean context, see Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco, CA, 1987).

66. Hints of such a prediction appear in isolated prophetic sayings such as Mark 9: 1; in sayings about universal dining in the kingdom: Matthew 8: 11; Luke 13: 28–9; and above all in the prayer that it would come: Matthew 6: 10; Luke 11: 20. The major depiction is in the 'Synoptic apocalypse' of Matthew 24: 1–36; Mark 13: 1–37; Luke 21: 1–33, pericopes that evidence considerable editorial development by followers of Jesus.

67. Matthew 21: 12–13; Mark 11: 15–17; Luke 19: 45–6; John 2: 13–17. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA, 1985), builds his whole reconstruction of Jesus on this event. Burton Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia, PA, 1988), discounts it as largely Markan invention. The multiple attestation of the story, its coherence with sayings, variously interpreted, about the end of the Temple (Matthew 24: 2; Mark 13: 2; Luke 21: 6; cf. Matthew 26: 61; Mark 14: 57–8; Acts 6:14), and the apparent embarrassment of Christians who recorded these traditions all argue for their historicity.

68. Matthew 27: 37; Mark 15: 26; Luke 23: 38. For an analysis of these traditions, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2 vols (New York, 1994). See also Nils A. Dahl, 'Messianic Ideas and the Crucifixion of Jesus', in Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, pp. 382–403.

69. Later Christian affirmations about the divine nature of Jesus should not be read into the use of the title in the Gospels. The term was first and foremost a royal title, as in 2 Samuel 7: 14; Psalm 2: 7. The application of the title to Jesus as an indication of his eschatological role as Davidic Messiah is clear in passages such as Romans 1: 3. Other models for thinking about the significance of Jesus, including an identification of him with divine Wisdom, soon added new dimensions to the title. See, e.g., the Epistle to the Hebrews 1: 1–5.

70. E.g. Mark 1: 34; 3: 12; 9: 9. This much-studied motif inspired a classic work of New Testament scholarship, Wilhelm Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. C. Grieg (Cambridge, 1971; German original 1901), and numerous studies since, e.g., Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, MA, 1979). For more on Mark's messianism, see Donald H. Juel, 'The Origin of Mark's Christology', in Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, pp. 449–60.

71. John 5: 17–18; 10: 30.

72. Some scholars, however, argue that the phrase was attributed to Jesus after his death. See, e.g., Philipp Vielhauer, 'Gottesreich und Menschensohn in der Verkündigung Jesu', and 'Jesus und der Menschensohn: Zur Diskussion mit Heinz Eduard Tödt und Eduard Schweizer', in his *Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament* (Munich, 1965).

73. Matthew 24: 30; 26: 64; Mark 13: 26; 14: 62; Luke 21: 27; 22: 69.

74. Matthew 8: 20; 9: 6; 12: 8; Mark 2: 10; 2: 28; Luke 5: 24; 6: 5.

75. For this position and a review of the whole issue, see Adela Yarbro Collins, 'The Influence of Daniel on the New Testament', in J. J. Collins, *Daniel*, pp. 90–112.

76. Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia, PA, 1973), pp. 160–91. See also Douglas R. A. Hare, *The Son of Man Tradition* (Philadelphia, PA, 1990); and P. M. Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge and Louisville, 1991).

77. For analysis of the resurrection traditions, see Pheme Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City, NY, 1984); for consideration of the experiential basis for such traditions, see Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis, MN, 1998).

78. In addition to Romans 1: 3, cf. Acts 2: 36; 3: 20–1.

79. For other factors in the development of early Christian messianism, see David E. Aune, 'Christian Prophecy and the Messianic Status of Jesus', in Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, pp. 404–22.

80. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.237.

81. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.252.

82. Josephus, *War* 2.214, *Ant.* 18.274–5.

83. Josephus, *War* 2.204–22; *Ant.* 18.236–71.

84. On the events leading to the revolt and its general course, see Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, Vol. 1, pp. 330–513; David Rhodes, *Israel in Revolution: 6–74 BCE: A Political History Based on the Writings of Josephus* (Philadelphia, PA, 1976). For a more analytical discussion, focusing on the political decisions of the Jerusalem aristocracy, see Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome AD 66–70* (Cambridge, 1987). See also Monette Bohrmann, *Flavius Josephus, the Zealots and Javneh: Towards a Rereading of the War of the Jews* (Bern, 1994).

85. Josephus, *War* 2.540–55.

86. On final stages of the revolt, see J. J. Price, *Jerusalem under Siege: The Collapse of the Jewish State 66–70 CE* (Leiden, 1992).

87. Josephus, *War* 2.433–40.

88. Josephus, *War* 2.444–8. He may have been one of the 'false messiahs' about whom the Gospels warn. Cf. Matthew 24: 4–5, 24; Mark 13: 5–6, 22; Luke 21: 8. Mark at least was written at the time of or just after the Jewish revolt against Rome; the other gospels some ten to twenty years later.

89. Josephus, *War* 7.155.

90. John: Josephus, *War* 4.389–95; Simon: *War* 4.508, part of his programme involved freedom for slaves, astute revolutionary politics perhaps, but also an action in conformity with the restoration of the jubilee year. His followers obeyed him as a king, *War* 4.510.

91. Josephus, *War* 8.218; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 66.7.2.

92. The extent of confiscation is debated. Josephus, *War* 7.216 suggests a massive sale of Judaean land, but he probably exaggerates. See Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 CE* (Minneapolis, MN, 1995), p. 4.

93. Cf. Revelation 11: 2.

94. The destruction of Jerusalem is not explicitly mentioned in Revelation, but labelling Rome 'Babylon' (Revelation 17: 5; 18: 2), recalls the former imperial power that had destroyed Jerusalem in the sixth century BCE. The prophetic proclamation of the fall of Rome (Revelation 18: 2–19, 8) probably is seen as requital for the destruction of Jerusalem.

95. Rome is transparent behind the symbolism of the beast from the sea (Revelation 13: 1–

10), and of the whore of Babylon (Revelation 17: 1–14), whose beastly steed becomes a city with seven hills and seven kings (17: 9).

96. Cf. Revelation 2: 9, where the author judges a group in Smyrna, claiming to be Jews, to be the 'synagogue of Satan'. Revelation 3: 9 makes a similar claim about a group in Philadelphia.

97. Revelation 2: 13, on which see Adela Y. Collins, 'The "Son of Man" Tradition and the Book of Revelation', in Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah*, pp. 536–68. Revelation ends with the promise of Jesus that he would come soon: Revelation 22: 12.

98. See Bruce Metzger, 'The Fourth Book of Ezra', in J. C. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New York, 1983), vol. 1, pp. 517–59, here 537–8. For detailed discussion, see Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Minneapolis, MN, 1990), pp. 202–23.

99. See S. Applebaum, *Jews and Greeks in Ancient Cyrene* (Leiden, 1979) pp. 269–344; T. D. Barnes, 'Trajan and the Jews', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 40 (1989): 145–62, who argues that the revolt started in Mesopotamia and spread west; and William Horbury, 'The Beginnings of the Jewish Revolt under Trajan', in Cancik et al. (eds), *Geschichte–Tradition–Reflexion,* vol. 1, pp. 283–304, who is critical of Barnes.

100. Horbury, 'The Beginnings of Jewish Revolt', follows the lead of Martin Hengel, 'Messianische Hoffnung und politischer "Radikalismus" in der jüdisch-hellenistichen Diaspora', in David Hellholm (ed.), *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (Tübingen, 1983), pp. 655–86, who suspects messianic expectations were at work in the revolt.

101. Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 68.32.1–2. Cf. 69.12.

102. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.2.3–4. For the data provided by papyri, see Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, pp. 529–34.

103. For a convenient summary, see Wilson, *Related Strangers*, pp. 5–7. Important studies include: Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, pp. 534–57, and Peter Schäfer, *Der Bar-Kokhba Aufstand* (Tübingen, 1981).

104. Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 59.12.1: 'At Jerusalem he founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the temple of the god he raised a new temple to Jupiter. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor brief duration.'

105. The prohibition is mentioned by the *Historia Augusta, Vita Hadriani* 14.1.

106. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.6.2.

107. Another intriguing parallel to the messianism of Qumran is the presence of 'Eleazar the priest' on some of the coins of the rebellion, indicating a priestly leader coordinated with the military. This may be Rabbi Eleazar of Modiim, uncle of Bar-Cosiba, mentioned in rabbinic sources. See Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, p. 544. Modiim, of course, was the ancestral home of the Hasmoneans.

108. *Talmud of Jerusalem, Tractate Taanit* 68d, as cited in Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, p. 543, n. 130.

109. For Jesus as the light from above come into the world, see John 1: 9; 8: 12.

110. Justin Martyr, *Apology* 1.31.6 claimed, shortly after the revolt, that Christians were persecuted by Bar-Cochba for their refusal to recognize his messianic status.

111. For the documents, letters, deeds, etc., in Hebrew and Aramaic, see P. Benoit et al., *Les grottes de Murabbaat* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 118, 124, 135, 145.

6. Messianism, Millennialism and Revolution in Early Islamic History

1. Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism* (New York, 1952), p. 4.

2. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York, 1969), p. 79.

3. See, for example, E. Bickerman, *The God of the Maccabees. Studies on the Meaning and Origin of the Maccabean Revolt* (Leiden, 1979).

4. The discovery of its Aramaic version among the Dead Sea Scrolls, in particular, has been important for underlining the priority of the cosmic apocalypses over the historical and political ones. (See F. García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic. Studies in the Aramaic Texts from Qumran* [Leiden, 1992], p. 71.)

5. Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. 3 (Leiden, 1991), pp. 393–9.

6. Said Amir Arjomand, *Revolution in World History* (Chicago, IL, forthcoming).

7. The rise of the Sasanian dynasty in early third-century Iran can be considered a revolution because it brought about far-reaching changes in religion, the polity and the social structure. Yet the Sasanian revolution was remarkably free from millennialism – and this despite the fact that its leaders championed the Zoroastrian faith and posed as its restorers. (Arjomand, *Revolution*, ch. 5.)

8. See A. Pizzorno, *Le Radici della Politica Assoluta e altri Saggi* (Milan, 1994).

9. Michael is mentioned once (Q. 2:92). Gabriel is explicitly named only three times (Q. 2: 91–2, 66: 4), but there are also several references to the [holy/trustworthy] spirit (*ru*) who brings down God's messages.

10. J. Pederson, 'Djabra'il', in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edn, Vol. 2 (Leiden, 1965), p. 363.

11. S. Grotzfeld, 'Daniyal in der arabischen Legende', in W. Fischer (ed.), *Festgabe fur Hans Wehr* (Wiesden, 1969), p. 84.

12. Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad. A translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, ed. and trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford, 1955), p. 240.

13. Tabari, *Tarikh wa rasul wa muluk*, 1: 2567; English translation (Albany, NY, 1987–96), Vol. 13, p. 147.

14. Nu'aym b. Hammad al-Marwazi, *Kitab al-Fitan* (Mecca, n.d. [1991]), pp. 18–19.

15. S. Bashear, 'Apocalyptic and Other Materials on Early Muslim–Byzantine Wars: A Review of Arabic Sources', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3, nos 1–2 (London, 1991).

16. Ch. Rabin, *Qumran Studies* (Oxford, 1957), p. 119, also points out that the loan word *harj*, which occurs as a stage of the apocalyptic *malhama*, is evidently the Hebrew *heregh* (slaughter).

17. Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, ed. and trans. C. E. Sachau (London, 1879), p. 300.

18. See P. Casanova, *Mohammed et la fin du Monde* (Paris, 1911), pp. 8–18, 207–13, 228.

19. Abu'l Ali b. Al-Husayn al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-Dhahab*, ed. C. Pellat, 7 vols (Beirut, 1970), Vol. 3, p. 7; A. J. Wensinck, *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane*, 2nd edn, 8 vols (Leiden, 1992 [1943]), Vol. 1, p. 470.

20. Casanova, *Mohammed*, pp. 49–53; Muhammad Ibn Sa'd, *Kitab al-tabaqat al-kabir*, E. Sachau et al. (eds), 9 vols. (Leiden, 1904) Vol. 1, p. 65; Wensinck, *Concordance*, Vol. 6, p. 107.

21. Muhammad b. Umar al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi*, ed. J. Marsden Jones (London, 1966) Vol. 1, pp. 72–8; Ibn Sa'd, *Kitab*, Vol. 3, p. 9.

22. K. Wagtendonk, 'Muhammad and the Qur'an. Criteria for Muhammad's Prophecy', in *Liber Micorum. Studies in Honor of Professor Dr. C. J. Bleeker* (Leiden, 1969), pp. 261–2.

23. G. Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book* (Uppsala, 1950), pp. 59–61.

24. M. Gil, 'The Creed of Abu Amir', *Israel Oriental Studies* 11 (Jerusalem, 1992) identified the *hanif* community of Arab monotheists as Jewish Manichaeans.

25. Rabin, *Qumran Studies*, pp. 114, 126–9; N. Golb, 'Qumran Covenanters and Later Jewish Sects', *Journal of Religion* 41 (Chicago, IL, 1961).

26. Y. Erder, 'The Karaites' Sadducee Dilemma', *Israel Oriental Studies* 14 (Jerusalem, 1994).

27. Q. 7: 156 mentions 'the gentile prophet whom you find written in the Torah'.

28. M. Philonenko, 'Une Tradition essenienne dans le Coran', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 170 (Paris, 1966).

29. Cf. 1 Enoch 5: 7: 'But to the elect there shall be light and joy, and peace, and they shall inherit the earth.'

30. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*, p. 107; Rabin, *Qumran Studies*, pp. 122–3.

31. Ka'b is referred to as Ka'b the *habr* in one atypical tradition (Tabari, *Tarikh* 1: 62), and a precious early poem refers to him as 'Ka'b the brother/fellow (*akhu*) of the *ahbar* (plural of *habr*)' (al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-Dhahab,* Vol. 3, p. 277).

32. In both instances, however, he is mentioned after Ishmael.

33. M. E. Stone, 'The Metamorphosis of Ezra: Jewish Apocalypse and Medieval Vision', *Journal of Theological Studies* 33, no. 1 (London, 1982): 2.

34. G. D. Newby, *A History of the Jews of Arabia* (Columbia, 1988), pp. 60–1.

35. 4 Ezra 14: 1–6; M. A. Knibb, 'Apocalyptic and Wisdom in 4 Ezra', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 13 (Leiden, 1982): 62.

36. Milal, 1: 99, cited in Y. Erder, 'The Origins of the Name Idris in the Qur'an: A Study of the Influence of Qumran Literature on Early Islam', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 49, no. 4 (Chicago, IL, 1990): 349.

37. H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds. Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton, NJ, 1992), pp. 56–8.

38. Tabari, *Tarikh,* Vol. 1, p. 666.

39. Knibb, 'Apocalyptic', p. 65.

40. Stone, 'Metamorphosis', p. 16.

41. Tabari, *Tarikh,* Vol. 1, pp. 2566–7.

42. W. Montgomery Watt, 'His Name is Ahmad', *Muslim World* 43 (Hartford, CT, 1953): 110–17.

43. Widengren, *Muhammad. The Apostle of God and His Ascension* (Uppsala, 1955), pp. 58–62.

44. The Muslim tradition came to consider Ahmad a variant of Muhammad and another name for the Prophet (H. Gätje, *The Qur'an and Its Exegesis*, trans. A. T. Welch [Oxford, 1996], pp. 69–70), and identified him with the Paraclete (Ali Ibn Rabban Tabari, *The Book of Religion and Empire* [Manchester, 1922], pp. 140–1). Ahmad and other variants of Muhammad were also identified with the Immanuel promised by Isaiah and the prophet whose coming was foretold by a host of other prophets. The idea of the Paraclete is thus de-apocalypticized and historicized to celebrate triumphal Islam as 'realized messianism' (Ibn Rabban, *Book of Religion*, pp. 95–138; Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, ch. 4).

45. Al-Marwazi, *Kitab al-Fitan*, pp. 356–60.

46. Gätje, *The Qur'an*, p. 129.

47. To suggest that most Jews and the Christians would find the final call of the Mahdi irresistible, one tradition predicts that he will recover the Ark of Covenant from the Sea of Tiberias (al-Marwazi, *Kitab al-Fitan*, p. 223).

48. For its historical prototype, see Said Amir Arjomand, 'Islamic Apocalypticism in the Classical Period', in B. McGinn (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 2 (New York, 1998), p. 248.

49. *Moreh ha-Sedheq*. Rabin, *Qumran Studies*, p. 120 goes so far as to suggest a passive reading of the first term as *mureh* to establish it as the prototype of the *mahdi* (rightly-guided).

50. See W. Madelung, 'Abd Allah b. Al-Zubayr and the Mahdi', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40, no. 4 (Chicago, 1981).

51. Cited in Said Amir Arjomand, 'Crisis of the Imamate and the Institution of the Occultation in Twelver Shi'ism: a Sociohistorical Perspective', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 4 (New York, 1996): 492.

52. Al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-Dhahab*, Vol. 3, p. 277.

53. J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les Mages hellenises*, 2 vols (Paris, 1938), Vol. 2, p. 115; the significance of the term *qa'em* is lost in the French translation on the following page.

54. Windengren, *Ascension*, pp. 44–9; *Muhammad*, p. 79.

55. Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, 110 vols (Beirut, 1983), Vol. 51, pp. 49–54; Arjomand, 'Islamic Apocalypticism', p. 252 for other references.

56. Muhammad b. al-Hasan, 'al-Saffar' al-Qummi, *Basa'ir al-Darajat* (Qum, 1983–84), p. 259.

57. Ibid., p. 151.

58. Several variants in ibid., pp. 176–89.

59. Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, Vol. 51, pp. 62–3.

60. Al-Marwazi, *Kitab al-Fitan*, p. 227.

61. Ibid., p. 213; Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, Vol. 51, pp. 44, 55, 58.

62. Al-Marwazi, *Kitab al-Fitan*, p. 226.

63. Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, Vol. 52, p. 311. It should be pointed out that political apocalypticism did have its opponents. The pious opposition to the revolutionary Mahdism of the followers of Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya found a resource in the belief in the Second Coming of Jesus. A tradition attributed to Hasan al-Basri, who was a leading figure in this opposition, categorically states: 'There will be no Mahdi other than Jesus son of Maryam' (W. Madelung, 'Mahdi', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edn, Vol. 5 [Leiden, 1986], p. 1234). This tradition has survived the avalanche of later traditions that affirm the return of both Jesus and the Mahdi.

64. A. A. al-Duri and A. J. al-Mutallabi (eds), *Akhbar al-Dawla al-'Abbasiyya* (Beirut, 1971).

65. Al-Marwazi, *Kitab al-Fitan*, pp. 418–19.

66. e.g. ibid., p. 116.

67. Ibid., pp. 52, 66–7, 97, 247, 424.

68. A. A. al-Duri, 'Al-Fikra al-mahdiyya bayn al-da'wa wa-'abbasiyya wa'l asr al-'abbasi al-awwal', in Wadad al-Qadi (ed.), *Studia Islamica and Arabica: Festschrift for Ihsan Abbas* (Beirut, 1981), p. 136.

69. Al-Duri, 'Al-Fikra', p. 128; see Arjomand, 'Islamic Apocalypticism', p. 278, n. 34 for other references.

70. Al-Duri and al-Mutallabi, *Akhbar al-Dawla*, p. 148.

71. Al-Marwazi, *Kitab al-Fitan*, p. 293, also p. 279.

72. Ibid., p. 118.

73. Ibid., pp. 118–19.

74. Ibid., p. 420.

75. Ibid., pp. 115–16.

76. Ibid., pp. 188–93.

77. Sa'd ibn Abd Allah Al-Ash'ari al-Qummi, *Kitab al-Maqalat wa'lFiraq* (Tehran, 1963), p. 76, #149.

78. Ibn Babuya al-Qummi, *Kamal al-din wa tamam al-ni'ma fi ithbat al-ghayba wa kashf al-bayra* (Tehran, 1975), p. 649; Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi, *Kitab al-Ghayba* (Najaf, 1965), p. 271.

79. Ibn Babuya, *Kamal al-din*, p. 649; variant in Tusi, *Kitab*, p. 267.

80. Al-Saffar, *Basa'ir*, pp. 150–3, 184.

81. Abu'l fath Muhammad b. Abd al-Karim al-Shahrastani, *Al-Milal wa'l Nihal* (Beirut, 1986) Vol. 1, p. 168.

82. This tradition was later anachronistically attributed to the Nawusiyya who allegedly considered Ja'far himself the Qa'im-Mahdi (Al-Ash'ari, *Kitab al-Maqalat*, pp. 79–80, #155).

83. We find the Karbiyya mentioned (Mutahhar b. Tahir al-Muqaddasi's *Kitab al-Bad' wa'l-ta'rikh* [Baghdad, 1962], Vol. 5, pp. 133–4) among the Waqifiyya to be discussed presently.

84. The Waqifiyya therefore maintained that the Imamate had ceased with him, hence their designation as the 'cessationists'.

85. Al-Ash'ari, *Kitab al-Maqalat*, p. 90, #173.

86. Said Amir Arjomand, 'The Consolation of Theology: The Shi'ite Doctrine of Occultation and the Transition from Chiliasm to Law', *Journal of Religion* 76, no. 4 (Chicago, IL, 1996): 557.

87. Al-Ash'ari, *Kitab al-Maqalat*, p. 91, #176.

88. Arjomand, 'Consolation', pp. 493–4.

89. Qalqashandi, Ma'athir, cited in Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship. Power and Sacred in Muslim, Christian and Pagan Polities* (London, 1997), p. 206.

90. E. Kohlberg, 'From Imamiyya to Ithna-ashariyya', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39 (London, 1976): 531.

91. Cited in Said Amir Arjomand, 'Imam Absconditus and the Beginnings of a Theology of Occultation: Imami Shi'ism around 900CE/280–290 AH', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117, Vol. 1 (New Haven, CT, 1997), p. 9.

92. Ibn Babuya, *Kamal al-din*, pp. 272–4, 338–9; Hossein Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), pp. 99–100.

93. Arjomand, 'Consolation'.

94. We know that the liminality of political revolutions engenders similar fear of freedom that can account for the wide popularity of the deterministic philosophies of history.

95. Al-Saffar, *Basa'ir*, pp. 150–61.

96. M. J. de Goeje, *Memoire sur les Carmathes du Bahrain et les Fatimides* (Leiden, 1886), pp. 116–19; E. S. Kennedy and D. Pingree, *The Astrological History of Masha'Allah* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), pp. vi–viii, 75.

97. D. Pingree, *The Thousands of Abu Ma'shar* (London, 1968), pp. 6–13.

98. Kennedy and Pingree, *Astrological History*, p. vi.

99. BL Oriental Ms. Add 7473, f. 60a.

100. It is interesting to note that Ibn Abi Tahir's treatise in political astrology is followed, in the same manuscript, by the Book of Jafr, 'extracted from the Books of Daniel and Solomon, son of David' (BL Oriental Ms. Add 7473, f. 63b).

101. De Goeje, *Memoire*, p. 122.

102. Al-Biruni, *Chronology*, pp. 196–7.

103. W. Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Albany, NY, 1988), p. 96.

104. Al-Biruni, *Chronology*, p. 197, translation slightly modified; de Goeje, *Memoire*, pp. 122–3.

105. Y. Marquet, 'Les Cycles de la souverainte selon les Epitres des Ikhwan al-safa', *Studia Islamica* 36 (Paris, 1972), pp. 53–6.

106. Cited in ibid., p. 51.

107. Ibid., pp. 60–2.

108. Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis. Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 140.

109. Nawbakhti's *Firaq al-Shi'a*, cited in Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi. The Rise of the Fatimids* (Leiden, 1996), p. 21.

110. Halm, *Empire*, ch. 1.

111. Tabari, *Tarikh*, Vol. 3, pp. 2218–20; Halm, *Empire*, pp. 70–81.

112. Halm, *Empire*, p. 82.

113. de Goeje, *Memoire*, pp. 121–2.

114. Halm, *Empire*.

115. Qadi al-Nu'man's *Majalis*, cited in Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 197, 193.

116. W. Madelung, 'The Fatimids and the Qarmatis of Bahrayn', in F. Daftary (ed.), *Medieval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 40.

117. Halm, *Empire*, p. 64.

118. Madelung, 'Fatimids', p. 50.

119. Cited in de Goeje, *Memoire*, p. 132, and Madelung, 'Fatimids', p. 46.

120. Madelung, 'Fatimids', pp. 46–7, translation slightly modified.

121. Madelung, *Religious Trends*, p. 99.

122. Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins. A Radical Sect in Islam* (London, 1985), pp. 48–9.

123. He later hinted that he himself was the Imam and the Qa'im of the Resurrection.

124. Lewis, *The Assassins*, p. 72; Ch. Jambet, *La Grande resurrection d'Alamut* (Paris, 1990), pp. 35–43.

125. Ala'ud-Din ata Malik Juwayni, *Ta'rikh'i jahan-gusha*, 3.vols (Leiden, 1937), Vol. 3, p. 240.

126. *Haft Bab-i Babi Sayyid-na*, in W. Ivanow, *Two Early Ismaili Treatises* (Bombay, 1933), pp. 5, 7.

127. Daftary, *Isma'ilis*, pp. 388–95.

128. *Haft Bab*, 14, 18; English translation in M. G. S. Hodgson, *Order of the Assassins. The Struggle of the Early Nizari Isma'ilis against the Islamic World* (The Hague, 1955), pp. 293, 296.

129. *Haft Bab*, 41; translation in Hodgson, *Order of the Assassins*, p. 322.

130. Jambet, *Grande resurrection*, pp. 62–6, 307, 311.

131. J. J. Buckley, 'The Nizari Isma'ilites' Abolishment of the Shari'a during the "Great Resurrection" of 1164/559 A.H.', *Studia Islamica* (Paris, 1984): 144; Jambet, *Grande resurrection*, pp. 96–9.

7. Medieval Europe

1. Epigraphs from: Arcisse de Caumont, *Abécédaire ou rudiment d'archéologie* (Paris, Caen, Rouen, 1851), p. 37; F. Guizot, *Histoire de la civilisation en France depuis la chute de l'empire romain* (Paris, 1845), Vol. 2, p. 402.

2. Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel, *La mutation féodale, xe.–xiie. siècle* (Paris, 1980); trans. C. Higgett as *The Feudal Transformation, 900–1200* (New York and London, 1991).

3. Georges Duby, 'Recherches sur l'evolution des institutions judiciares dans le sud de la Bourgogne', *Le Moyen Age* 53 (1946): 149–94; 54 (1947): 15–38; trans. C. Postan in G. Duby, *The Chivalrous Society* (London, 1977).

4. Georges Duby, *La société aux xie. et xiie. siècles dans la région maconnaise* (Paris, 1953, 1971).

5. The political and structural implications remain relatively muted in Georges Duby, *L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes dans l'occident médiévales* (Paris, 1962), trans. C. Postan as *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West* (London, 1968), but emerge more strongly in *Le Temps des cathedrales* (Paris, 1976), trans. E. Levieux and B. Thompson as *The Age of the Cathedrals* (Chicago, IL, 1981), and *Guerriers et paysans* (Paris, 1973), trans. H. B. Clarke as *The Early Growth of the European Economy* (London, 1974). Many of Duby's fundamental arguments are most clearly presented in the papers collected in *Hommes et structures* (Paris, 1974, substantially translated by C. Postan in G. Duby, *Chivalrous Society*); and further implications are developed especially in *La dimanche de Bouvines* (Paris, 1973), trans. C. Tihanyi as *The Legend of Bouvines* (Cambridge, 1990); *Les trois ordres, ou l'imaginaire du féodalisme* (Paris, 1978), trans. A. Goldhammer as *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (Chicago, IL, 1980); *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-century France* (Baltimore and London, 1978); and *Le chevalier, la femme et le prêtre* (Paris, 1981), trans. B. Bray as *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest* (London, 1981). See further Claudie Duhamel-Amado and Guy Lobrichon (eds) *Georges Duby: l'ecriture de l'histoire* (Brussels, 1996); R. I. Moore, 'Duby's Eleventh Century', *History* 69 (1984): 36–49.

6. e.g. A. Chédeville, *Chartres et ses campagnes, xie.–xiiie. siècles* (Paris, 1973); G. Devailly, *Le Berry du xe. siècle au milieu du xiie.* (Paris, 1973); J.-P. Poly, *La Provence et la société féodale* (Paris, 1976); André Debord, *La société laique dans le pays de Charente, Xe.–XIIe. siècle* (Paris, 1984); Christian Lauranson Rosaz, *L'Auvergne et ses marges du viiie. au xie. siècle* (Le Puy en Velay, 1987).

7. Pierre Bonnassie, *La Catalogne du xe. á la fin du xie. siècle: croissance et mutations d'une société* (Toulouse, 1976); 2nd edn., *La Catalogne au tournant de l'an mil* (Paris, 1990).

8. This was not in fact quite so novel as we sometimes think in the heat of debate: Louis Halphen's fine 1932 textbook placed *L'essor de l'Europe* in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and R. W. Southern begins *The Making of the Middle Ages* (London, 1951) at the end of the tenth. On the other hand, many fine specialists in the earlier period remain unconvinced that the European society of the eleventh century differs fundamentally from that of Charlemagne.

9. Pierre Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiévale: le Latium méridional et la Sabine du ixe. siècle à la fin du xii. siècle* (Rome, 1973). See also the papers collected in *Structures féodales et féodalisme dans l'occident méditerranean (Xie.–XIIIe. siècles): bilan et perspective de recherches* (Rome, 1980).

10. e.g. Richard Hodges, *Dark Age Economics* (London, 1982); Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe* (London, 1983).

11. e.g. Peter Spufford, *Money and Its Use in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 27–105; and for a fine overview (even though published as long ago as 1978) the first section of Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford).

12. Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (London, 1971) takes the Abbasid revolution (AD 750) as its terminus, but for the West the consequences of the long dissolution of ancient society are not really played out until the ninth century and beyond: cf. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom* (Oxford, 1996).

13. The work of Elizabeth Magnou-Nortier is particularly relevant for heresy and its context, starting with *La société laïque et l'Eglise dans la province ecclésiastique de Narbonne de la fin du viiie. á la fin du xie. siècle* (Toulouse, 1974); her essay 'The Enemies of the Peace: Reflections

on a Vocabulary, 500–1100', in Thomas Head and Richard Landes (eds), *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca, NY, 1992), pp. 58–79 is an excellent specimen of her approach as well as important in itself.

14. As far as I know only the heavily criticized Guy Bois, *La Mutation de l'an Mil* (Paris, 1989), trans. J. Birrell as *The Transformation of the Year 1000* (Manchester, 1992) has argued in this fashion for a region north of the massif central – though, like the Victorian parlour maid's baby, only a very little one; cf. A. Guerreau, 'Lournand au xe. siècle: histoire et fiction', *Le Moyen Age* 96 (1990).

15. See above all the essays collected in Jacques le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago, IL, 1980), and *L'imaginaire médiévale* (Paris, 1985), trans. A Goldhammer as *The Medieval Imagination* (Chicago, IL, 1988).

16. Most directly in the papers collected in Peter Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London, 1982), especially 'The Rise and Influence of the Holy Man' and 'Society and the Supernatural'; *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 1978); *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago, IL, 1981).

17. Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities* (Princeton, NJ, 1925); *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Brussels, 1937), trans. B. Miall as *Mahommed and Charlemagne* (London, 1939); see also Bryce Lyon, *Henri Pirenne* (Gent, 1974).

18. Duby's interest in popular heresy, and the acuteness of his comments on it, contributed substantially to the resurgence of interest in the subject since the 1960s, and its breaking out of the narrow confines of ecclesiastical history, as attested by his participation in the conference at Royaumont in 1963, whose proceedings, Jacques le Goff (ed.), *Hérésies et sociétés dans l'Europe pré-industrielle* (Paris and The Hague, 1968), marks the beginning of that revival.

19. Georges Duby, *L'An Mil* (Paris, 1980), pp. 11, 17.

20. Richard Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes, 989–1034* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), pp. 127–9, 299–327.

21. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London, 1956).

22. For a discussion of Cohn's work in relation to the historiography of popular religion, included in the original presentation of this chapter at Yale, see my 'The Birth of Popular Heresy: A Phenomenon of the Millennium?', forthcoming in *Journal of Religious History*.

23. Dominique Barthélemy, 'La mutation féodale, a-t-elle eu lieu?', *Annales ESC* 47 (1992): 767–77; 'Qu'est-ce que le servage en France au XIe siècle?' *Revue Historique* 287 (1992): 238–84; 'Qu'est-ce que la chevalerie en France au XIe siècle?' *Revue Historique* 290 (1994); 15–74: *La société dans le comté de Vendôme de l'an mil au XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1993).

24. Head and Landes (eds), *The Peace of God*.

25. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and the Deceits of History*.

26. Dominique Barthélemy, 'Le paix de dieu dans son contexte', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévales* 40 (1997): 3–35.

27. Ibid., p. 4; on the Carolingian antecdents and institutional framework of the Peace of God movement see especially the essays by Magnou-Nortier and Goetz in Head and Landes (eds), *The Peace of God*.

28. R. I. Moore, 'Heresy, Repression and Social Change in the Age of Gregorian Reform', in Scott L. Waugh and Peter D. Diehl (eds), *Medieval Christendom and its Discontents* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 19–46, at pp. 19–22.

29. Vilgard of Ravenna was hardly 'popular' and was, in any case, reported by Radulfus Glaber, and so reflects eleventh- rather than tenth-century perception.

30. Meanwhile, e.g., Daniel F. Callahan, 'The Sermons of Ademar of Chabannes and the Cult of St. Martial of Limoges', *Revue bénédictine* 86 (1976): 251–93; Michael Frassetto, 'The Art of Forgery: Ademar of Chabannes and the Sermons and the Cult of St. Martial of Limoges',

Comitatus 26 (1995): 11–26; 'Heresy, Celibacy and Reform in the Sermons of Ademar of Chabannes', in Michael Frassetto (ed.), *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform* (New York, 1998), pp. 131–48.

31. Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon,* ed. J. Chavanon (Paris, 1897), p. 173.

32. Anselm of Liège, *Gesta episcoporum … Leodiensis*, ed. R. Koepke, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores VII*, pp. 226–8.

33. Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee* (Cambridge, 1947), still maintained in the 1982 reprint.

34. Poly and Bournazel, *Feudal Transformation,* pp. 272–308.

35. Defended in detail in Moore, 'Heresy, Repression and Social Change'. For another recent and powerful reinterpretation, see Heinrich Fichtenau, *Heretics and Scholars in the High Middle Ages, 1000–1200* , trans. Denise A. Kaiser (Philadelphia, PA, 1998), pp. 13–51.

36. See Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and the Deceits of History*, and works by Callahan and Frassetto in note 30. I must emphasize not only that this work is still in progress, but that the interpretation which I place upon the growing body of Ademar's references to heresy differs from that of the scholars who are producing it: I proceed with a due sense of my foolhardiness and their generosity.

37. Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, p. 194.

38. R. I. Moore , 'Postscript', in Head and Landes (eds), *The Peace of God*, pp. 320–5.

39. P. Bonnassie and R. Landes, 'Une nouvelle hérésie est née dans le monde', in M. Zimmerman (ed.), *Les sociétés méridionales autour de l'an mil* (Paris, 1992*),* pp. 435–59.

40. R. H. Bautier, 'L'hérésie d'Orléans et le mouvement intellectuel au debut du xi.e siècle', *Enseignement et vie intellectuelle, IXe–XVIe siècles: Actes du 95e. congrés des sociétés savantes (Reims, 1970), Section philologique et historique* (Paris, 1975), vol. I, pp. 63–88.

41. Barthélmy, 'Le paix de dieu', p. 25.

42. Cf. Peter Brown, 'Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity: From Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages', in his *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (London, 1972), pp. 119–46; Edward Peters, *The Magician, the Witch and the Law* (Philadelphia, PA, 1978), pp. 15–18.

43. 'The Manichaeans in the Writings of Ademar of Chabannes and the Origins of Medieval Heresy', 34th International Conference on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, 1999. I am grateful to Michael Frassetto for the opportunity to read this paper, and permission to cite it, in advance of publication.

44. Barthélemy, 'Le paix de dieu', p. 28.

45. J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 139, col. 461.

46. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and the Deceits of History*, pp. 289–93.

47. Barthélmy, 'Le paix de dieu', pp. 28–9.

48. Richard Landes, 'On Owls, Roosters and Apocalyptic Time: A Historical Method for Reading a Refractory Documentation', *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 49 (New York, 1996): 49–69.

49. Ibid., pp. 62, 54.

50. Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee.*

51. Peters, *The Magician, the Witch and the Law,* R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 50–1, 141–2.

52. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and the Deceits of History,* pp. 94–5.

53. Ibid., pp. 175–7.

54. Cf. Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), pp. 158–76.

55. Patrick Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 1994); Lester K.

Little, *Benedictine Maledictions: Liturgical Cursing in Rromanesque France* (Ithaca, NY, 1993); Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY, 1992).

56. R. I. Moore, 'Between Sanctity and Superstition', in M. Rubin (ed.), *The Work of Jacques le Goff and the Challenges of Medieval History* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 55–67.

57. For many examples, Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 1991).

58. Dominique Barthélemy, 'Debate: The "Feudal Revolution"', *Past & Present* 152 (1996): 196–205; see also the comments of Stephen D. White in the same issue, pp. 205–25.

59. For example in Patrick Geary, 'Vivre en conflit en France sans état', *Annales ESC* 41(1986): 1107–33, trans. in his *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*; Stephen D. White, 'Feuding and Peace-Making in the Touraine around the Year 1100', *Traditio* 41 (1986): 195–263; 'Proposing the Ordeal and Avoiding it: Strategy and Power in Western French Litigation, 1050–1100', in T. N. Bisson (ed.), *Power and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia, PA, 1995).

60. Cf. Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1978); Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy* (Princeton, NJ, 1983).

8. Wrestling with the Millennium

1. For an overview of the development of apocalypticism, see the three volumes of *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (New York, 1998). Vol.1. *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, edited by John J. Collins; Vol. 2. *Apocalypticism in Western History and Culture*, edited by Bernard McGinn; and Vol. 3. *Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and the Contemporary Age*, edited by Stephen J. Stein.

2. For an introduction, see James VanderKam, 'Messianism and Apocalypticism', in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 1, pp. 193–228.

3. For a recent survey of the last and most mysterious book of the Bible, see Adela Yarbro Collins, 'The Book of Revelation', in ibid., pp. 384–414.

4. Many standard histories of Protestant apocalypticism have made this evident. For an overview, see Robin Barnes, 'Images of Hope and Despair: Western Apocalypticism: ca. 1500–1800', in McGinn (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 2, pp. 143–84, and the literature cited there.

5. Jean-Robert Armogathe, 'Interpretations of the Revelation of John: 1500–1800', in ibid., p. 186.

6. B. Dombert (ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Episcopi De civitate Dei*, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1877), Book 20.7 (2: 420): 'Sed cum eos, qui tunc resurrexerint, dicant inmoderatissimis carnalibus epulis vacaturos, in quibus non solum nullam modestiam teneant, sed modum quoque ipsius incredulitatis excedant.' Augustine attacks literal millenarianism in other places; e.g. *De civitate Dei* 20.21, and *De haeresibus* 8. For a sketch of Augustine, Joachim, and some other Catholic approaches to the millennium, see Bernard McGinn, *The Meanings of the Millennium* (Washington, DC, 1996).

7. Ibid.: '… aut certe mille annis pro annis omnibus huius saeculi posuit, ut perfecto numero notaretur ipsa temporis plenitudo'.

8. *De civitate Dei* 20.7 (2: 419–20): 'Quae opinio esset utcumque tolerabilis, si aliquae deliciae spirituales in illo sabbato adfuturae sanctis per Domini praesentiam crederentur. Nam etiam nos hoc opinati fuimus aliquando.' Augustine's early 'spiritual' millenarianism is reflected in documents dating 393–95 CE; e.g. *Serm* 259.2; *Sermo Mai* 94.4; *De diversis quaestionibus* LXXXIII 57.2; and *Contra Adimantinum* 2.2. See G. Folliet, 'La typologie du sabbat chez saint

Augustin: son interprétation millénariste entre 388 et 400', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 2 (1956): 371–90.

9. Joachim of Fiore, *Expositio in Apocalypsim* (Venice, 1527; Frankfurt, 1964), f. 211rv. Other discussions of the millennium can be found in ff. 15v–16r, 27v, 47r and 84v. On Joachim's view of the millennium, see Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot. Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought* (New York, 1985), pp. 154–5; and Robert E. Lerner, 'Joachim of Fiore's Breakthrough to Chiliasm', *Cristianesimo nella storia* 6 (1985): 489–512.

10. For an overview of apocalypticism and millenarianism in Christianity down to 600 CE, see Brian E. Daley, 'Apocalypticism in Early Christian Theology', in McGinn (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 2, pp. 3–47. On second-century forms of millenarianism, see Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Chicago, IL, 1964), ch. 14; and Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Future Hope in Early Christianity* (Oxford, 1992).

11. Origen's interpretation of Apocalypse 20: 1–6, recoverable only in fragments, identified the first resurrection with conversion to Christ and the forgiveness of sins in baptism. See Henri Crouzel, 'La "première" et la "seconde" résurrection des hommes d'après Origène', *Didaskalia* (Lisbon) 3 (1973): 3–20.

12. See Methodius of Olympus, *Symposium* 9.3, in Nathanael Bonwetsch (ed.), *Methodius* (Leipzig, 1917), p. 117; and Victorinus of Pettau, *Commentarium in Apocalypsim*, in Johannes Haussleiter (ed.), *Victorini Episcopi Patavoniensis Opera* (Vienna–Leipzig, 1916), pp. 140–4. On the latter, consult Lloyd G. Patterson, 'Methodius' Millenarianism', *Studia Patristica* 24 (1993): 306–15.

13. See especially the *Divinae Institutiones* 7.23–5, in Samuel Brandt and George Laubman (eds), *L. Coeli Firmiani Lactanti Opera Omnia*, 2 vols (Vienna–Leipzig, 1890–97), vol. 1: pp, 655–65. For a translation and study of the seventh book of the *Divinae Institutiones*, see Bernard McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality* (New York, 1979), pp. 17–80.

14. For Jerome's view of Apocalypse 20: 1–6, see e.g. his *Commentarium in Ezekielem* 11.36, and the *prologus* to his edition of Victorinus's *Commentarium in Apocalypsim*.

15. Tyconius's full text is lost, though many aspects of his interpretation can be recovered from other commentators. On Tyconius, see Kenneth B. Steinhauser, *The Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius. A History of Its Receptions and Influence* (Frankfurt, 1987); Paula Frederiksen, 'Tyconius and the End of the World', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 28 (1982): 59–75; and 'Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse', in R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 1993), pp. 20–37; and Daley, 'Apocalypticism in Early Christian Theology', pp. 29–30.

16. See Robert E. Lerner, 'The Medieval Return to the Thousand-Year Sabbath', in R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, pp. 51–71; and 'Millennialism', in McGinn (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 2, pp. 327–61. For the later medieval period, see also Roberto Rusconi, 'Millenarismo e centenarismo: tra due fuochi', *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia della Università degli Studi di Perugia* 22, 8 (1984–85): 2.

17. Methodius, *Revelatio* 13.15, in W. J. Aerts and G. A. A. Kortekaas (eds), *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius. Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen*, 2 vols (Louvain, 1998), vol. 1, p. 179: Et erit pax et tranquillitas magna super terra, qualis nondum est facta, sed neque fiet similis illa eo quod novissima est et in fine saeculorum. For a partial translation, see Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End. Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (New York, 1998), pp. 70–6.

18. For rich materials on this tradition of apocalypticism, see Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy: A Study of Joachimism*, 2nd edn (Notre Dame, IN, 1993), 'Part Three. Antichrist and Last World Emperor'.

19. See ibid., 'Part Four. Angelic Pope and *Renovatio Mundi*'.

20. The importance of this tradition was first shown by Robert E. Lerner, 'Refreshment of

the Saints: The Time after Antichrist as a Station for Earthly Progress in Medieval Thought', *Traditio* 32 (1976): 97–144.

21. M. Lefevre (ed.), *Hippolyte: Commentaire sur Daniel* 4. 23–4 (Paris, 1947), pp. 306–10. On the importance of Hippolytus in traditions concerning Antichrist, see Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist. Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (San Francisco, CA, 1994), pp. 60–3.

22. Olivi's *Lectura super Apocalypsim* still lacks a modern edition. For his views on the millennium, see Lerner, 'The Medieval Return to the Thousand-Year Sabbath', pp. 61–2, and especially, David Burr, *Olivi's Peacable Kingdom* (Philadelphia, PA, 1993), pp. 167–72. As Lerner notes (p. 66), this 700-year span for the coming millennial era was one of the sixty errors of the *Lectura* singled out by a papal commission who examined the book in 1318.

23. This enumeration appears both in Arnold's *De tempore adventu Antichristi* of 1301, and in his later *Expositio super Apocalypsi*; see Joaquim Carreras i Artau (ed.), *Arnaldi de Villanova. Expositio super Apocalypsi* (Barcelona, 1971), p. 119.

24. See Lerner, 'The Medieval Return to a Thousand-Year Sabbath', pp. 67–8.

25. See Bernard McGinn, '"Pastor Angelicus": Apocalyptic Myth and Political Hope in the Fourteenth Century', *Santi e Santità nel secolo XIV* (Assisi, 1989), pp. 219–51.

26. This development was first noted by Eugenio Garin, 'L'attesa dell'età nuova e la "Renovatio"', *L'attesa dell'età nuova nella spiritualità della fine del medioevo* (Todi, 1962), pp. 10–35. See also Harry Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance* (Bloomington, IN, 1969); and Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 429–72.

27. See Donald Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence. Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance* (Princeton, 1970); and Lorenzo Polizzotto, *The Elect Nation. The Savonarolan Movement in Florence 1494–1545* (Oxford, 1994).

28. On the role of popular prophecy in Italy at the end of the fifteenth and in the sixteenth centuries, see Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy* (Princeton, NJ, 1990). For some examples of apocalyptic prophets and texts, see Giampaolo Tognetti, 'Note sul profetismo nel Rinascimento e la letteratura relativa', *Bollettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 82 (1970): 129–57; and especially the papers in M. Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period* (Oxford, 1992).

29. For Annio's life, see Robert Weiss, 'Traccia per una biografia di Annio da Viterbo', *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 5 (1962): 425–41. In English, see Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols (New York, 1934), vol. 4, pp. 263–7.

30. See Anthony Grafton, 'Invention of Traditions and Traditions of Invention in Renaissance Europe: The Strange Case of Annius of Viterbo', in A. Grafton and A. Blair (eds), *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia, PA, 1990), pp. 8–38.

31. The following categories are an expansion of the argument in Bernard McGinn, 'Revelation', in Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (eds), *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 523–41.

32. This synchronic interpretation was based upon the principle of *recapitulatio*, still one of the primary tools among modern exegetes for dealing with the confusing structure of the apocalypse. Recapitulation first appeared in the commentary of Victorinus who expresses it this way: 'Do not regard the order of what is said, because the sevenfold Holy Spirit, when he has run through matters down to the last moment of time and the end, returns again to the same times and completes what he has left unsaid' (J. Haussleiter [ed.], *Commentarium in Apocalypsim* 8, nos 2–3: 86).

33. On Lyra's interpretation, which had already been used by two earlier Franciscans (Alexander Minorita and Peter Auriol), see Philip D. Krey, *The Apocalypse Commentary of Nicholas of Lyra*, PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1990.

34. There is no general survey, though the discussion of late medieval and early modern

exegesis by Wilhelm Bousset in the 'Einleitung' to his *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen, 1906), pp. 73–101, is still helpful. On Catholic exegesis of the apocalypse in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see the essays of Jean-Robert Armogathe, 'Dall'escatologia alla storia: l'esegesi cattolica dell'Apocalisse nel Seicento', and Roberto Osculati, '*Hic Romae*: Cornelio a Lapide commentatore dell'*Apocalisse* al Collegio Romano', in R. Rusconi (ed.), *Storia e figure dell'Apocalisse fra '500 e '600* (Rome, 1996), pp. 301–30. For a sketch in English, consult Armogathe, 'Interpretations of the Revelation of John: 1500–1800', pp. 185–203.

35.   The best study of Annius's Apocalypse commentary is Cesare Vasoli, 'Profezia e astrologia in uno scritto di Annio da Viterbo', *I miti e gli astri* (Naples, 1977), pp. 17–49. See also the comments in Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 463–4. For Annius's influence on the apocalyptic throught of the powerful Hapsburg minister, Mercurino di Gattinara, see John M. Headley, 'Rhetoric and Reality: Messianic, Humanist, and Civilian Themes in the Imperial Ethos of Gattinara', in Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome*, pp. 246–8.

36.   Annius's commentary was first printed at Genoa in 1480. I will cite from the 1485 Nuremberg edition, *Tractatus de futuris christianorum triumphis in saracenos Magistri Johannis Viterbensis.*

37.   The *primus tractatus* concludes with a scholastic *quaestio* (AVIv–BVr) in which Annius refutes sixteen objections to the identification of Muhammad with the Antichrist.

38.   In the course of his detailed historicized reading of Apocalypse 17 (ff. CIIr–CVIIv), Annius cites many prophetic authorities, including the Pseudo-Joachim *Super Hieremiam* (CIIIr).

39.   Annius's *Dubium de monarchia pontificis maximi* can be found in ff. CVr–CVIIv. In 1537 Luther republished this as *Ioannis Nannis de monarchia papae disputatio*, accompanied by his own highly polemical *Postfatio*; see *D. Martin Luther Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar, 1914), Vol. 50, pp. 96–104. Luther also poked fun at Annius's prediction of the downfall of the Turks after 1480: 'Sed res ipsa declaravit eius prophetiam italicam arrogantiam et vanitatem fuisse' (p. 97).

40.   *De futuris christianorum triumphis* (f. DVIIIv): 'Prima resurrectio est totius ecclesie ad universalem unionem sub uno pastore Christo in qua a morte fidei et miseria errorum et oppresione sarracenica resurget ad unionem omnium ecclesiarum et victoriam contra bestiam [=Islam] et pseudoprophetam [=Muhammad]. Et de hac loquitur hoc capitulum et lactantius … secunda autem resurrectio erit corporum.'

41.   *De futuris christianorum triumphis* (f. AIIIv): 'Quod anno salutis mcccclxxx inchoabit depressio imperii turchorum et favor paulatim christianorum consurget et electo orientis imperatore ex improviso augebitur.'

42.   These include Stefano Taleazzi (*c.* 1445–1515), Cardinal Bernardino Lopez de Cavajal (1456–1523), Giorgio Benigno Salviati (*c.* 1450–1520), and Pietro Galatino (1460–*c.* 1540). Many of these figures are studied in the essays found in Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome*.

43.   On Egidio, see John W. O'Malley, *Giles of Viterbo on Church and Reform. A Study in Renaissance Thought* (Leiden, 1968); Marjorie E. Reeves, 'Cardinal Egidio of Viterbo: A Prophetic Interpretation of History', in Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome*, pp. 91–109; and the same author's 'Cardinal Egidio of Viterbo and the Abbot Joachim', in Gian Luca Potestà (ed.) *Il profetismo gioachimita tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento* (Genoa, 1991), pp. 139–56.

44.   For a brief summary of this unpublished work, see Reeves, 'Cardinal Egidio of Viterbo', pp. 99–104.

45.   See ibid., pp. 95–6.

46.   On this aspect of apocalypticism, see Adriano Prosperi, 'New Heaven and New Earth: Prophecy and Propaganda at the Time of the Discovery and Conquest of the Americas', in Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome*, pp. 279–302.

47.   The literature on Columbus's millenarianism is large. See, e.g., the papers by Adriano Prosperi, Delno C. West, and Juana Mary Arcelus Ulibarrena in Potestà (ed.) *Il profetismo gioachimita tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento*.

48. Prosperi, 'New Heaven and New Earth', p. 284: 'Columbus's case remains isolated and exceptional: only in him do we find the venture of discovery united with its interpretation in terms of prophecy and missionary conquest. After him, the paths return to their various ways; only the members of the religious orders who were engaged more or less directly in the task of propagating the faith outside Europe continued to foster interpretations of that kind.'

49. See Barnes, 'Images of Hope and Despair', for an overview.

50. On Luther's apocalypticism, see Kurt-Viktor Selge, 'Die eschatologisch-apokalyptische Dimension in der Theologie Luthers', in Rusloni (ed.), *Storia e figure dell'Apocalisse fra '500 e '600*, pp. 127–44.

51. Evil popes had been identified with Antichrist from the end of the tenth century, and the role of a papal Antichrist became strong in the thirteenth century. Even though there was some precedent for considering the papacy itself as Antichrist in the writings of John Wyclif and among the radical Hussites, Luther's 'papacy-as-Antichrist' view was a powerful new creation. See McGinn, *Antichrist*, pp. 201–8; and Roberto Rusconi, 'Antichrist and Antichrists', in McGinn (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism,* Vol. 2, pp. 287–325.

52. Luther saw the three woes predicted by the eagle in Apocalypse 8: 13 as a key to understanding the three main attacks on the gospel: that of Arius (9: 1–12), Muhammad (9: 13–21), and the papal Antichrist announced in 11: 4 and more fully described in Apocalypse 13. For Luther's understanding of the Apocalypse, see his 1530 Preface, as found in *D. Martin Luther Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Deutsche Bibel*, vol. 7, pp. 406–20.

53. As claimed by Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530–1645* (Oxford, 1979), p. 178.

54. Among the early examples was the Venetian convert to Calvinism, Jacopo Brocardo, who published his *Interpretatio et paraphrasis libri Apocalypseos* in Leiden in 1580. On Brocardo, perhaps the most complete follower of Joachim among the sixteenth-century exegetes, see Bernard McGinn, 'Reading Revelation: Joachim of Fiore and the Varieties of Apocalypse Exegesis in the Sixteenth Century', in Rusconi (ed.), *Storia e figure dell'Apocalisse fra '500 e '600*, pp. 22–4.

55. The decree concentrates on pessimistic predictions, but among the many prophets of the time are not a few who also held to forms of Joachite millenarianism. See Nelson A. Minnich, 'Prophecy and the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–1517)', in Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome*, pp. 63–87.

56. Even more emphatic in support of Rome was the identification of the heavenly Jerusalem (see Apocalypse 21) with the historical Church on earth, as argued by Cardinal Cajetan as early as the time of Fifth Lateran. See Jean-Robert Armogathe, 'L'ecclésiologie de Cajetan et la théorie moderne de l'état', in Bruno Pinchard (ed.), *Rationalisme analogique et humanisme théologique, La culture de Thomas de Vio 'Il Gaetano* (Naples, 1993), pp. 171–2.

57. On the sack of Rome as an apocalyptic event, see André Chastel, *The Sack of Rome* (Princeton, NJ, 1983); and Marjorie Reeves, 'A Note on Prophecy and the Sack of Rome (1527)', in Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome*, pp. 271–8.

58. The best introduction to Galatino is Roberto Rusconi, 'An Angelic Pope before the Sack of Rome', in Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome*, pp. 157–87. Rusconi surveys the *Commentaria* on pp. 161–2, 174 and 180–5. Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 235–8, 366–7 and 442–6, also studies Galatino's relation to Joachim.

59. Quoted in Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 237. Galatino, like Egidio and others, saw the discovery of America as a sign of the approach of the millennial era; see Rusconi, 'An Angelic Pope', p. 184.

60. The reputation of the figures to be treated here can be gauged from the list of noted apocalypse commentators that the Dominican Thomas Malvenda made at the beginning of his important work, *De Antichristo libri undecim* (Rome, 1604): 'Cesareae Cappadociae Episcopus, S. Beda, & qui nomine S. Ambrosii circumfertur auctor, Ambrosius Ansbertus, Haimo, S. Ansel-

mus, Rupertus Abbas, Richardus de S. Victore, B. Albertus Magnus, Strabus, S. Thomas, Lyranus, Claudianus a Monte Martyrum, *Caelius Pannonius*, Gagneius, Catherinus, Sa [?], *Franciscus Ribera*, *Blasius Viegas*, & *Gaspar Melus* multa de Antichristo edisserunt.' (The names in italic will be treated here.)

61. Little has been written about these two exegetes, though there is a brief treatment in Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 468–70. On Serafino, see the general account in Luigi M. Loschiavo, 'Séraphin de Fermo', *Dictionaire de spiritualité*; 15 vols (Paris, 1932–94) 14, pp. 624–7; and the comments on his millennialism in Prosperi, 'New Heaven and New Earth', pp. 297–9. On Coelius I have been able to find no literature.

62. I will use the 1556 edition found in *Opere del R.P.D. Serafino da Fermo, canonico regolare, & predicatore rarisimo* (Venice, 1556), ff. 297–341.

63. Like Joachim, Serafino divided the era of the Church into seven *status* that had exact parallels with the seven *status* of the Old Testament (*Breve dichiaratione*, ff. 299v–300r). He is also a firm believer in recapitulation, which he describes as follows: 'Et perche i sette stati della chiesa hanno diverse proprieta, non si potea ciascun descrivere per una sola visione ma per molte, accio quel che si tace in una, si esprima nell'altra' (f. 309r).

64. Ibid. (f. 337r): 'resterebbe anchor mezo millenario alla fine del mondo nel quale tempo dovendosi convertir tutto il mondo, il demonio sara ligato, e non e da disprezzar che sta espositione, perche spesso la scrittura piglia una parte del tempo per il tutto ... e que sto sara il settimo stato della Chiesa il quale principiando dalla morte d'Antichristo, hara il suo circuito, e andara di grado in grado fin che mancando la fede, di novo sara sciolto il demonio'.

65. Ibid. (f. 338r) 'la qual visione [Apocalypse 21] io non intendo della patria celestiale della qual parla nel seguente capitolo, ma della Chiesa rinovata in terra, laqual appresso le molte nationi, hara le dodici tribu d'Israel come chaiaramente quivi sono nomate'.

66. Coelius Pannonius, *Collectanea in sacram Apoclypsin D. Ioannis Apostoli* (Venice, 1547). In his *praefatio* (f. IIIrv) Coelius divides his seven *tempora* as follows (Joachim's divisions are given in parentheses): (1) the time of the Apostles contained in Apocalypse 1–3 (J–Apocalypse 1: 1–3: 22); (2) the time of the martyrs in Apocalypse 4–7 (J–Apocalypse 4: 1–8, 1); (3) the time of heretics in Apocalypse 8–11 (J–Apocalypse 8: 2–11, 18); (4) the time of the Muhammad and other heretics and hypocrites in Apocalypse 12–14 (J–Apocalypse 11: 19–14, 20); (5) the time of the Turks and 'new heretics' (=Reformers) in Apocalypse 15–16 (J–Apocalypse 15: 1–16, 17); (6) the time of the *magnus Antichristus* in Apocalypse 17–20 (J–Apocalypse 16: 18–19, 21); and (7) the earthly sabbath in Apocalypse 21–2 (J–Apocalypse 20: 1–10). The major difference between the two commentators comes in times (6) and (7), which can be partly explained by Joachim's inclusion of the eighth *tempus* figured in Apocalypse 20: 11–22, 21, representing the era of the heavenly Jerusalem that lies beyond history. Where did Coelius get his Joachite division? Although he does cite Joachim himself at least once (see f. 321r), in the preface he says he depends on a 'Codex vetustissimus, incerto auctore … qui primam mihi in Apocalypsin fenestram aperuit, ab audaciore eius tractatione abstinuissem' (f. IIIv).

67. Like Serafino, Coelius also identifies the falling star of Apocalypse 9: 1–2 with a heretical doctor (=Luther), who fell away from the Church and seduced many (f. 143rv). Nevertheless, his exegesis is less systematically anti-Lutheran than Serafino's.

68. Coelius, *Collectanea* (f. IIIv): 'Septimum sabbati est, hoc est, quietis, & communis pacis, in quo velut ex mortuis rediviva renascetur post Antichristi magni interitum ecclesia, quando omnis Israel salvus erit. Quod etsi per Gog, & Magog turbandum sit, brevis tamen ea turbatio fiet, priore aurea etate redeunte. post quod non erit tempus amplius.'

69. See the interesting discussion in *Collectanea*, f. 202v. Coelius says that the whole fourth *tempus* is that of Islamic persecution of the Church; see the discussion of the fourth seal (Apocalypse 6: 7–8) in ff. 106r–108v.

70. On the three, as against Joachim's two, orders of *viri spirituales*, see Coelius, *Collectanea*, ff. 225v–230r, and 277v. Coelius's references to the *pastor angelicus* are rather subdued and seem

to depend on Galatinus, as his exegesis of Apocalypse 7 may indicate. Unlike Galatinus, however, he says that any Angelic Pope must appear *after* Antichrist's destruction (f. 117 v).

71. In *Collectanea*, ff. 128v–129v, Coelius refuses to speculate about the length of the predicted millennium, but in ff. 178v–179v he allows that it should be a long time in order to allow for those who fall into vices and forget the Lord's return time to repent.

72. Coelius, *Collectanea* (ff. 303v–304r): 'In qua re hoc solum pro certo habemus, quia foelicissimum illud futurum est ecclesiae regnum, cuius vel brevissimum tempus pro longissimo merito sui computabitur, quando pii exultabunt et inerrabili laetitia iucundabuntur, et de Antichristi interitu et de eorum pace, praesertim vero de Christi gloria ... Quod dum fiet, pulchra admodum tranquillitate conticescent universa. Tunc laetiores in suo cursu dies erunt, sol blandior spiculis ludentibus irradiabit, non mugiet horrendo tonitruo caelum, nec fulmina irati Dei iacentur. Tum ros et hymber complutu tellurem amplius foecundabunt, ridebunt exortu astra ... Quid plura? Tunc redibunt aurea saecula.' Immediately before this, Coelius adopts a traditional topos in identifying the millennium with the half-hour silence in heaven of Apocalypse 8: 1.

73. Gaspar a Melo, *Commentaria in Apocalypsin divi Iohannis Evangelistae* (Valladolid, 1589) contains 955 numbered pages and another 76 unnumbered pages of indices and addenda. I know of no modern discussions of Melo.

74. Among the medievals, his favourite commentators were Bede, Rupert of Deutz, Richard of St Victor, and St Thomas Aquinas (the commentary *Vidit Jacob*, now generally assigned to the school of Hugh of St Cher). Joachim makes a modest appearance, being cited about sixteen times in the first twelve chapters. Melo shows no real acquaintance with the distinctive aspects of Joachim's exegesis.

75. For example, the war in heaven between Michael and the Dragon of Apocalypse 12: 7 signifies the constant struggle between good and evil in the Church (Melo, *Commentaria*, pp. 457–59).

76. His historicizations tend to be universal and therefore essentially moralizations. For example, the seven heads of the dragon (Apocalypse 12: 3) do not signify seven specific persecutors, as they had for Joachim and his followers, but symbolize all evil rulers from the beginning of history down to Antichrist (Melo, *Commentaria*, pp. 450–1).

77. See, e.g., the whole of the comment on ch. 11 (Melo, *Commentaria*, pp. 402–38).

78. Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, Bk 1 (PL 93:154BC).

79. Melo, *Commentaria*, p. 773: 'Locus ergo iste totus de vero quodam Angelo, scilicet de Michaele, vel alio intelligendus est, & de pace Ecclesiae, post mortem, & interitum Antichristi, ut exponit Caelius...' There follows a paraphrase of passages from Coelius's *Collectanea*.

80. See Robertus Bellarminus, *Opera Omnia*, 7 vols (Venice, 1721) Vol. 1, pp. 348–91.

81. I will use a slighter later edition, *Francisci Riberae Villacastinensis ... In sacram Beati Ioannis Apostoli, & Evangelistae Apocalypsin Commentarii* (Lyons, 1593). There were also editions in 1592 and 1603.

82. There is thus an odd resemblance between Ribeira's exegesis and the apocalyptic exegesis of the 'Dispensationalist' Protestants, first advanced by John Nelson Darby (1800–82). On Ribeira, see Armogathe, 'Interpretations of the Revelation of John: 1500–8800', pp. 189–90; 'Dall'escatologia alla storia', pp. 303–4; and the unpublished paper of my colleague, Michael Murrin, 'Francisco de Ribeira: Apocalypse as Science Fiction'.

83. Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis*, p. 91.

84. Ribeira, *Commentarii*, pp. 372–407. Ribeira's commentary on Apocalypse 20 makes up about 8 per cent of his entire work, while Melo's remarks constitute only about 5 per cent of his lengthy book.

85. Augustine's *De civitate Dei* is cited some twenty-nine times. Other major authorities are Jerome (ten), Saints Ambrose and Eusebius (each five), and Gregory I (three).

86. Ribeira, *Commentarii*, p. 385: 'quod mille anni intelliguntur usque ad consummationem saeculi, nec potest ullo modo dici sanctos illius extremi temporis mille annos esse regnaturos usque ad finem eiusdem saeculi'.

87. Ibid., p. 388: 'Ex his profecto haud absurde colligi videtur multos annos restare usque ad diem iudicii.' Ribeira concludes his discussion with an argument for the heretical character of millenarianism (pp. 389–91).

88. Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 274–90.

89. Blasius Viegas, *Commentarii Exegetici in Apocalypsim Ioannis Apostoli* (Venice, 1602). This edition contains 835 pp. in double columns. Viegas's commentary was printed no fewer than eleven times between 1601 and 1617.

90. See ibid., pp. 184–5, and the discussion of Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 278–9. Viegas knew Joachim fairly well, citing Joachim, or Pseudo-Joachim, some thirty-eight times by my count.

91. Ibid., pp. 793–808. Vegas's fifteen pages on ch. 20 constitute less than 2 per cent of the whole commentary (contrast this with the 210 pp. he devotes to ch. 12). Most of his comment mirrors that of Ribeira, but Viegas attacks his fellow Jesuit's view of the 1,000-year reign of the saints, claiming that it refers *more prophetico* to the whole eternal reign of the saints in heaven, not to the time they spend in heaven awaiting the coming judgment (see pp. 800–2).

92. Ibid., pp. 342–3, where the comments are quite close to those of Ribeira.

93. Ibid., p. 710: 'Non est autem verisimile, tam brevi quadraginta quinque dierum spatio, post mortem Antichristi, homines usque adeo deposituros tantae persecutionis memoriam, ut in ea vivant securitate, otio, ac deliciis, quae ante diluvium praecessisse memorantur.' Here Viegas is drawing on the tradition that cited Matthew 24: 38 as evidence that those who will live before the Last Judgment will live like people in the time before the flood – i.e. in pleasure, and without mindfulness of the coming time of destruction.

94. See Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 283–5.

95. Benito Pereyra, *Disputationes super libro Apocalypsis*, as found in his *Opera Theologica* (Cologne, 1620), vol. 1, pp. 904–12.

96. On Alcasar, see Armogathe, 'Interpretations of the Revelation of John: 1500–1800', pp. 191–3; and Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 282–3.

97. Quoted from Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, p. 283 (Alcasar's work is not currently available to me).

98. I will cite Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentaria in Acta Apostolorum, Epistulas Canonicas et Apocalypsin* (Antwerp, 1662). On this Jesuit exegete, see Silver de Smet, 'Lapide (Cornelius a Lapide)', *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, Vol. 9, pp. 253–5. The best study of Lapide's Apocalypse commentary is Roberto Osculati, '*Hic Romae*: Cornelio a Lapide commentatore dell'*Apocalisse* al Collegio Romano', in Rusconi (ed.), *Storia e figure dell'Apocalisse fra '500 e '600*, pp. 315–29; see also Armogathe, 'Interpretations of the Revelation of John', pp. 189–90, 193.

99. In the 'Quaestiones proemiales' (ed., pp. 7–13), Lapide discusses four different ways to approach the *materia* of the apocalypse, with his longest consideration being devoted to Alcasar (pp. 8b–9b). His essentially negative comments on his fellow Jesuit can be summarized in three phrases: (1) 'Verum in hac explicatione multa difficultatem habent'; (2) 'quod ex prophetia faciat historiam'; and (3) 'Verum haec, licet ingeniosa sint, tamen solidae expositioni non satisfaciunt'.

100. For his praise of these expositors, see Lapide, *Commentaria*, pp. 12a–13a. Lapide's division of the text is as follows: Apocalypse 1–3 deals the beginnings of the Church in John's time; Apocalypse 4–22 deals with its history in two parts, with chs 4–10, especially the seven seals, treating the Church through the centuries, and chs 11–22 the last days. Nevertheless, as Osculati has shown ('*Hic Romae*', pp. 316, 318–19, 323–4 and 327), Cornelius a Lapide's fundamental concern is with the book's moral and interior message in true Tyconian style.

101. Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy*, pp. 281–2, for references.

102. Lapide, *Commentaria*, p. 12b: 'Nam prophetiae eius, potius somnia ac derilia videntur.' For other attacks on Joachim, see the passages cited in Osculati, '*Hic Romae*', p. 327.

103. The exegesis of Apocalypse 20 takes up a rather small part of the total commentary, 17 pages (pp. 289–306) of the 350 of the whole comment (i.e. about 5 per cent). The attack on millenarianism is to be found in a Lapide, *Commentaria*, pp. 291b–293b. For a summary of a Lapide's exegesis of Apocalypse 20, see Osculati, '*Hic Romae*', pp. 326–7.

104. *R. P. D. Fr. Ioannis da Sylveira … Commentariorum in Apocalypsim B. Ioannis Apostoli*, 2 vols (Lyon, 1663). Another edition appeared at Lyon in 1700.

105. On the importance of Bossuet's interpretation, see Armogathe, 'Interpretations of the Revelation of John: 1500–1800', pp. 195–7.

106. J.-B. Boussuet, *L'Apocalypse avec une explication* (Paris, 1689), pp. 461–94, for the comment on Apocalypse 20, especially pp. 465–6 and 487–94. Bossuet concludes (p. 494): 'Concluons donc que tout ce qu'on dit de ce règne de mille ans, pris à la lettre, engage à des absurdités inexplicables … Croyons, dis-je, toutes ces choses, et laissons aux interprètes protestans ces restes des opinions judaïques, que la lumière de l'Eglise a entièrement dissipées depuis treize cents ans.'

107. Armogathe, 'Interpretations of the Revelation of John: 1500–1700', pp. 186–7.

108. The decree can be found in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 36 (1944), p. 212.

109. The Apostolic Letter *On the Coming of the Third Millennium* (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*) (Washington, 1997), was first issued on 10 November 1994. Even more revealing than the 1994 Letter, is the present pontiff's curiously-neglected Encyclical on the Holy Spirit, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, issued on Pentecost (18 May) of 1986 (see *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 78 [1986], pp. 809–900).

110. *On the Coming of the Third Millennium*, paragraph 23 (p. 31).

9. Deciphering the Cosmos from Creation to Apocalypse

1. Jalal al-Din Rumi, *Divan-i Shamsi-i Tabriz*, 3 vols (Tehran, 1981) vol. 2, p. 510 (*ghazal* no. 1229).

2. Khwaja Sayyid Ishaq, *Khwabnama*, MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 1042, Millet Library, Istanbul, 16a–17a; Nasrallah b. Hasan 'Ali Nafaji, *Khwabnama*, MS. Persian 17, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, 4a–10a. The second source gives a very short account of the incident, stating that Fazlallah abandoned normal life immediately after hearing the verse in a bazaar in Astarabad.

3. For previous summary assessments of Fazlallah's life and work see: Hamid Algar, 'Astarabadi, Fazlallah', *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. 1, pp. 841–4; Abdülbâki Gólpinarli, *Hurufîlik Metinleri Kataloğu* (Ankara, 1973), pp. 2–16; Helmut Ritter, 'Studien zur Geschichte der islamischen Frömmigkeit: Die Anfänge der Hurufisekte', *Oriens* 7, no. 1 (June 1954): 6–32; Sadiq Kiya, *Vazhanama-yi Gurgani* (Tehran, 1951), pp. 9–48; Ya'qub Azhand, *Hurufiyya dar tarikh* (Tehran, 1990), pp. 3–38; H. T. Norris, 'The Hurufi Legacy of Fazlullah of Astarabad', in Leonard Lewisohn (ed.) *The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism* (London, 1992), pp. 87–97.

4. For a discussion of this period of Shi'ism see Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine*

Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam, trans. David Streight (Albany, 1994).

5. This is, of course, an oversimplification of the debate within Sufism regarding the identity and authority of those entrusted with esoteric knowledge. For detailed analyses of the issue of spiritual authority or *walaya* in Sufi thought see: Michel Chodkiewicz, *The Seal of Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn al-'Arabi*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 21–46; Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism*: *Two Works by al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi* (Richmond, Surrey, 1996); Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin, TX, 1998), pp. xvii–xxi.

6. For the historical development of the imam as the foremost religious guide see: Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism*; Marshall Hodgson, 'How did the Early Shi'a become Sectarian?' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955): 1–13.

7. For the development of Shi'i legal thought see: Wilferd Madelung, 'Authority in Twelver Shi'ism in the Absence of the Imam', in George Makdisi, Dominique Sourdel and Janine Sourdel-Thomine (eds), *La notion d'autorité au Moyen Age Islam, Byzance, Occident* (Paris, 1982); idem., 'The Sources of Isma'ili Law', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 35 (1976): 29–40.

8. For the background and aftermath of this event see: Marshall Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins* (The Hague, 1955), pp. 143–209; Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 324–434.

9. The loss of Nizari intellectual momentum is evident most conspicuously from the dramatic decline in both the quantity and quality of Persian Nizari literature in the post-Alamut period (cf. Daftary, *Isma'ilis*, pp. 435–78).

10. For general secondary overviews of such religious activity during this period see: Marshall Hodgson, *Venture of Islam* (Chicago, 1974), Vol. 2, pp. 493–500; B. S. Amoretti, 'Religion under the Timurids and the Safavids', in P. Jackson (ed.), *Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge, 1986), Vol. 6, pp. 610–23; Shahzad Bashir, 'Between Mysticism and Messianism: The Life and Thought of Muhammad Nurbakhs (d. 1464)', PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1997, pp. 8–77.

11. For a wide survey of surviving Hurufi literature see Gólpinarlı's *Katalog*.

12. The year of birth is recorded in brief chronologies found in the following Hurufi manuscripts: MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 269, Millet Library, Istanbul, 1a; MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 1052, Millet Library, Istanbul, 7a; MS. Or. 6381, British Library, London, 2a (cf. E. G. Browne, 'Further Notes on the Literature of the Hurufi Sect', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* [1907]: 550–1).

13. These dreams are narrated in considerable detail in Fazlallah's prose works. See particularly, his *Nawmnama*, MS. Ee.1.27, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, 406a–11b.

14. Nafaji, *Khwabnama*, 4a–10a.

15. Ibid., 11b. The first three names are transcribed incorrectly in the manuscript. The fourth person mentioned in the dream is possibly Bahlul Majnun (d. *c.* 190/805–6) named in the *Akhbar 'uqala' al-majanin* of Abul-Qasim Hasan b. Muhammad Nishapuri (d. 406/1015–16). For details about his life see Zarrinkub, *Dunbala-yi justuju dar tasavvuf-i Iran* (Tehran, 1990), p. 41.

16. Nafaji, *Khwabnama*, 12a–b. Solomon and the hoopoe appear also in other dreams reported in the *Nawmnama* (408b) and Khwaja Ishaq's *Khwabnama* (18a).

17. Nafaji, *Khwabnama*, 13a–b; Ishaq, *Khwabnama*, 17b–19a. 'Ali al-A'la, another major disciple of Fazlallah, also calls Fazlallah *varis-i mulk-i Sulayman* in his versified *Kursinama* (MS. Persan 255, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 116b).

18. The shorthand used for technical terms by Hurufi authors usually abbreviates the title to *sa'il* from *sahib-i ta'vil*.

19. Nafaji, *Khwabnama*, 16b; Ishaq, *Khwabnama*, 19b. The general significance of dream interpretation is explained also in Ishaq, *Khwabnama*, 10b–15b.

20. Ishaq, *Khwabnama*, 19b, 55b.

21. Ibid., 26b, 31a, 33a, 35a–b. For the religious environment of the Sarbadar state see: Bashir, 'Between Mysticism and Messianism', pp. 12–34; C. Melville, 'Sarbadarids', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn (hereafter cited as *EI2*), Vol. 9, pp. 47–9; Jean Aubin, 'Aux origines d'un mouvement populaire médiéval: le Cheykhisme du Bayhaq et du Nichâpour', *Studia Iranica* 5 (1975): 213–24.

22. Ishaq, *Khwabnama*, 20a–22a, 48a.

23. Ibid., 19b. Later Hurufi chronologies place the event in the year 788/1386 (cf. MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 269, 1a and MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 1052, 7a). The discrepancy may indicate the difference between the revelatory moment and the time when Fazlallah publicly proclaimed his message.

24. Nafaji, *Khwabnama*, 66a–67a. A more extended version of this *hadith*, which identifies the inquisitor as Abu Dharr al-Ghiffari, is given in the anonymous Hurufi treatise *Nafa'is al-haqa'iq* (MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 993, Millet Library, Istanbul, 3b–4a). For a general discussion of the properties attributed to letters in Islamic thought see: T. Fahd, 'Huruf', *EI2*, Vol. 4, pp. 595–6; idem., 'Djafr', *EI2*, Vol. 2, pp. 375–7.

25. The significance of the additional Persian letters is discussed in numerous Hurufi works. In addition to the basic principle, one Hurufi source argues that the transposition of the four letters is an instance of the concept of abrogation in the Qur'an (cf. J. Burton, 'Naskh', *EI2*, Vol. 7, pp. 1009–12). In normative Islamic thought, this principle implies that if a Qur'anic verse is contradicted by a later verse or action of Muhammad, the later saying supersedes the earlier. When extended beyond Muhammad's life, this same essential principle justifies Fazlallah's revelations abrogating the literal message of the Qur'an (cf. Anonymous, *Muqaddimat al-'ushshaq*, MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 87, Millet Library, Istanbul, 11b–12a).

26. 'Ali al-A'la, *Kursinama*, 115a.

27. The considerable erudition of many of Fazlallah's close companions is evident from extant Hurufi literature attributed to them. See, for example, works by Abu l-Hasan, Khwaja Ishaq, 'Ali al-A'la, Sayyid Sharif, 'Imad al-Din Nasimi and Kamal al-Din Hashimi described in Gólpinarlı's *Katalog*.

28. For the Mahdi see: W. Madelung, 'Mahdi', *EI2*, Vol. 5, pp. 1230–8; Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism* (Albany, NY, 1982); Bashir, 'Between Mysticism and Messianism', pp. 144–65.

29. Astarabadi, *Nawmnama*, 410b. In another dream, he saw the sun rising from the West which was commonly accepted as a sign for the arrival of the Mahdi (*Nawmnama*, 407b; 'Ali al-A'la, *Kursinama*, 106a).

30. e.g. 'Ali al-A'la, *Kursinama*, 3b, 15a, 114b, etc.; Nafaji, *Khwabnama*, 83b; Kathleen Burrill, *The Quatrains of Nesimî, Fourteenth-Century Turkic Hurufi* (The Hague, 1972), p. 127.

31. For the full development of this idea see my 'Enshrining Divinity: The Death and Memorialization of Fazlallah Astarabadi in the Development of Hurufi Thought', *Muslim World* 90, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 287–306.

32. Ishaq, *Khwabnama*, 49b.

33. Ibid., 55a–b.

34. Shams al-Din Sakhawi, *al-Daw' al-lami' li-ahl al-qarn al-tasi'*, 8 vols (Beirut, 1992), Vol. 6, p. 173 (based upon Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani's *Anba' al-ghumr fi abna' al-'umr*).

35. The arrest was accomplished by Shaykh Ibrahim, the Timurid overlord of Shirvan (cf. Ishaq, *Khwabnama*, 56a; 'Ali al-A'la, *Kursinama*, 119a). The year of death is reiterated in several Hurufi sources (Gólpinarlı, *Katalog*, pp. 10–12).

36. Astarabadi, *Nawmnama*, 411b. In another instance, he identified the violent death of a person in the dream of a certain Qazi Bayazid in Shamakhi as a pointer for his own imminent execution (Ishaq, *Khwabnama*, 49b–50a). For Fadlallah's last will and testament see Abdülbâki

Gólpinarli, 'Fadlallah-i Hurufi 'nin wasiyyat-nama'si veya wasaya'si', *Şarkiyat mecmuası* 2 (1958): 53–62.

37.   Four of Fazlallah's children (two male and two female) died in a plague in 1417–18 (cf. Ghiyas al-Din Muhammad Astarabadi, *Istivanama*, MS. Persian 34, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, 52a–b). Another son was alive in 1430 since he was persecuted following an attempt on the life of the Timurid Mirza Shahrukh (cf. Abdülbâki Gólpinarli, 'Fadlallah-i Hurufi 'nin oğluna ait bir mektup', *Şarkiyat mecmuası* 1 [1956]: 37–57). For more details on the activities of Fazlallah's children and principal disciples see the discussion below and Ritter, 'Anfänge': 32–44.

38.   For the significance of the ritual and the second expectation see below.

39.   For a sophisticated analysis of Islamic hagiographic literature see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*. Besides this work, the structural features of Islamic hagiography as a literary genre have so far received little scholarly attention.

40.   For Fazlallah's genealogy see the anonymous *Nasbnama-yi hazrat-i sa'il*, MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 1039, Millet Library, Istanbul, 80b.

41.   The original inspiration for this assertion comes from a *hadith qudsi* (God's speech reported through Muhammad and not in the Qur'an) very popular among Sufis (cf. Badi' al-Zaman Furuzanfar, *Ahadis-i masnavi* [Tehran, 1982], pp. 28–9).

42.   Qur'an, 10: 3, 13: 2, 20: 5, 25: 59, 32: 4, 57: 4.

43.   Fazlallah Astarabadi, *Javidannama*, MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 1000, Millet Library, Istanbul, 2bff. The phrase is discussed in varying degrees of detail in all major Hurufi works. For a pre-Hurufi emphasis on the phrase see Sa'd al-Din Hamuwayi (d. 1252–53), *Risala dar huruf*, MS. Pertev Paşa, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, 13b–18a.

44.   Qur'an, 2: 31–4, 7 :11, 17: 61, 18: 50, 20: 116.

45.   Khwaja Sayyid Ishaq, *Valayatnama*, MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 1037, Millet Library, Istanbul, 42a–b, 56a–57b. The range of possibilities inherent in Adam are also demonstrated evocatively in an anonymous poem where the poet describes himself as the embodiment of good and evil in a series of opposing images (MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 1052, Millet Library, Istanbul, 7a).

46.   As explained below, by '*huruf*' in this context Hurufis mean not the letters of any ordinary alphabet but the primordial entities that underlie all of creation. To emphasize this crucial distinction, I will use upper case L for these entities in the present discussion.

47.   Ghiyas al-Din, *Istivanama*, 63a.

48.   In an interesting incident, this Hurufi theory was challenged at the Central Asian court of Ulugh Beg where Chinese speakers stated that their language required producing more than thirty-two sounds. Fazlallah's son Nurallah defended the Hurufi viewpoint by trying to prove that the 'extra' Chinese sounds were in fact only combinations of the thirty-two basic ones (cf. Gólpinarlı, 'Fazlallah-i Hurufi 'nin oğluna ait bir mektup', 47).

49.   Anonymous, *Hidayatnama*, in Clément Huart, *Textes persans relatifs à la secte des houroûfis* (Leiden, 1909), p. 2.

50.   Sayyid Sharif, *Risala-yi ism va musamma* in Huart, *Textes persans*, 91. The work is printed anonymously here but its identity is certain based upon other manuscripts (cf. MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 993, Millet Library, Istanbul, 40a–47a).

51.   Sharif, *Risala-yi ism va musamma*, pp. 92–3.

52.   Anonymous, *Risala dar huruf*, MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 993, Millet Library, Istanbul, 24b–25b, 27b. The manuscript does not identify the text's author but it is likely to be Sayyid Sharif based upon stylistic and contextual considerations.

53.   Khwaja Sayyid Ishaq, *Mahramnama*, in Huart, *Textes persans*, pp. 21–3.

54.   Ibid.

55.   Ibid., pp. 39–40.

56. The way the science of letters could be applied to the Arabo-Persian alphabet in specific is described in the anonymous *Hidayatnama* (Huart, *Textes persans*, pp. 1–12).

57. Khwaja Ishaq states that Fazlallah could divine people's circumstances by just observing their comportment before they even uttered a single word (cf. *Khwabnama*, 23a, 39a, 41a).

58. Fazlallah's ability to transcend the boundaries of space and time is illustrated in a series of dreams recorded in the *Nawmnama* in which he saw himself present at signature moments in the lives of previous prophets (e.g. Adam at the moment of creation, Moses in front of the burning bush, Muhammad during his ascension to heaven, etc.) (cf. *Nawmnama*, 406b, 408a–b, 410b).

59. Kamal al-Qaytagh, *Ita'atnama*, MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 1052, Millet Library, Istanbul, 15a–16a. For the identity of the author of this work see Gólpinarlı, *Katalog*, pp. 103–4.

60. Khwaja Sayyid Ishaq, *Tahqiqnama*, MS. Farsça 1132, Istanbul Üniversitesi Library, 41b. Islamic ideas about the end of the world were never standardized and could vary considerably even within a single sect. For a popular presentation by a highly influential theologian see Muhammad al-Ghazzali, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife*, tr. T. J. Winter (Cambridge, UK, 1989).

61. Nafaji, *Khwabnama*, 70b.

62. Ibid., 63b–64b.

63. Ibid., 58a–63b; Ghiyas al-Din, *Istivanama*, 53b–54b.

64. This segment of Hurufi history is discussed in detail in my forthcoming article 'Enshrining Divinity: The Death and Memorialization of Fazlallah Astarabadi in the Development of Hurufi Thought'.

65. Qur'an, 2: 46, 2: 223, 2: 249, 18: 105, etc.

66. Ghiyas al-Din, *Istivanama*, 54a–b. This part of *Istivanama* is discussed also in E. G. Browne, 'Some Notes on the Literature and Doctrine of the Hurufi Sect', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1898): 72–8. It is worth noting here that our information about the proponents of this viewpoint may be biased since it comes to us only from those who opposed them. In the absence of any direct sources, however, there is little choice but to take it at face value.

67. Cf. Hamid Algar, ''Ali al-A'la', *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. 1, p. 858.

68. Ghiyas al-Din, *Istivanama*, 54b–58a.

69. Ibid., 57a.

70. The Nuqtavi or Pisikhani movement, which traced its roots at least partly to Fazlallah's inspiration, exhibited antinomian traits during the Safavid period and was brutally crushed by political authorities (cf. H. Algar, 'Nuktawiyya', *EI2*, Vol. 8, pp. 114–17; Sadiq Kiya, *Nuqtaviyyan ya Pisikhaniyyan* [Tehran, 1951]; Abbas Amanat, 'The Nuqtawi Movement of Mahmud Pisikhani and his Persian Cycle of Mystical-Materialism', in Farhad Daftary [ed.], *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge, 1996).

71. 'Ali al-A'la, *Kursinama*, 117a.

72. For a detailed discussion of the provenance of this *hadith* see Wilferd Madelung, ''Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr and the Mahdi', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 11 (1981): 291–305.

73. The ritual is described most extensively in Ghiyas al-Din, *Istivanama*, 127b–128a, and Ishqurt Dede, *Salatnama*, MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 1043, Millet Library, Istanbul, 35a.

74. Ishaq, *Mahramnama*, 32, 33, 39.

75. Kalimatallah's life is discussed in Mu'in ad-Din Mihrabi, *Kalimatallah al-'Ulya (Dukhtar-i Fadlallah Nai'imi, bunyad-guzar-i junbish-i Hurufiyya): Banu-yi inqilabi va gumnan az qarn-i nahum* (Cologne, 1991).

76. Besides the incident involving Kalimatallah, the Hurufis were implicated also in an attempt on the life of the Timurid ruler Mirza Shahrukh (d. 1447) in 1430. For a review of the historical material relating to this event see my above-mentioned article and Roger Savory,

'A 15th-century Safavid Propagandist at Heart', in *Semi-Centennial Volume of the Middle Western Branch of the American Oriental Society* (Bloomington, IN, 1969).

77. Tasköprüzade, *al-Shaqa'iq al-nu'maniyya fi'ulama' al-dawla al-'Uthmaniyya*, ed. Ahmet Subhi Furat (Istanbul, 1985), pp. 59–61. The only corroboration for this story in a Hurufi source is a cryptic reference in the verses of an anonymous Hurufi poet who states that the beard and moustache of an accursed demon (*div-i la'in*) caught fire because he denied Fazlallah's status (Anonymous, *Divan*, MS. Ali Emiri Farsça 186, Millet Library, Istanbul, 10b).

78. For the connection between Hurufis and Bektashis see: Abdülbâki Gólpinarlı, 'Bektasilik-Hurufilik ve Fazl Allah'in öldürülmesine düsürülen üç tarih', *Sarkiyat mecmuası* 5 (1964): 15–22; John Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London, 1937), pp. 58–62, 148–61.

79. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zindiklar ve Mülhidler (15.–17. Yüzyillar)* (Istanbul, 1998), pp. 131–5.

80. See, for example, Anonymous, *Muqaddimat al-'ushshaq*, 13a–35b. Fazlallah's own works also contain scattered discussions of rituals, though it is easier to see the issue clearly from summaries assembled in later Hurufi works.

81. Ishaq, *Khwabnama*, 41a–b.

10. American Millennial Visions

1. Two terms central to this essay, millennialism and apocalypticism, require brief comment. Millennialism defined narrowly is the belief in a 1,000-year period of earthly peace and prosperity. It is, however, commonly applied more broadly to any period of happiness or good fortune. Apocalypticism, derived from a verb meaning 'to disclose' or 'uncover', refers broadly to prophetic disclosure or revelation. Both of these terms have acquired additional meanings through centuries of eschatological use. The broader term is apocalypticism. Some scholars use the two almost interchangeably. In this chapter initially the terms will be linked closely, but by the end of the chapter apocalypticism will be preferred.

2. Jonathan Edwards, 'Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England', in C. C. Goen (ed.), *The Great Awakening*, Vol. 4 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT, 1972), p. 353.

3. For a sustained discussion of Edwards's 1742 speculation, see Gerald R. McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (University Park, PA, 1992), pp. 37–92.

4. See Stephen J. Stein (ed.), *Apocalyptic Writings*, Vol. 5 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT, 1977), pp. 95–305, which contains the text of Edwards's 'Notes on the Apocalypse'.

5. James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco?: Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley, CA, 1995), p. 108.

6. The text of Koresh's exegetical reflections has been published as an appendix in ibid., pp. 191–203.

7. Ibid., pp. 193, 196.

8. Ibid., p. 203.

9. Additional literature on the Branch Davidian tragedy includes James Lewis (ed.), *From the Ashes: Making Sense of Waco* (Lanham, MD, 1994); Stuart A. Wright (ed.), *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict* (Chicago, IL, 1995); and Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins, 'Religious Totalism, Exemplary Dualism, and the Waco Tragedy', in Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (eds), *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements* (New York, 1997), pp. 261–84.

10. David E. Smith, 'Millenarian Scholarship in America', *American Quarterly* 17 (1965):

535. Brown's essay is 'Watchers for the Second Coming: The Millenarian Tradition in America', *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 39 (1952): 441–58.

11. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Messianism in Medieval and Reformation Europe and Its Bearing on Modern Totalitarian Movements* (London, 1957); Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress* (Berkeley, CA, 1949); Whitney Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Upstate New York* (Ithaca, NY, 1950); and Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Nashville, TN, 1957).

12. Hillel Schwartz, 'The End of the Beginning: Millenarian Studies, 1969–1975', *Religious Studies Review* 2, no. 3 (1976): 1.

13. Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia, PA, 1975); John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1975); Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study of Joachimism* (Oxford, 1969); Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (New York, 1972); William L. Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603–60* (London, 1969); Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596–1728* (New York, 1971); and Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British–American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Chicago, IL, 1970).

14. Schwartz, 'End of the Beginning', p. 1.

15. Three years after Schwartz's essay, Leonard I. Sweet published a review essay with extensive bibliographical citations. See 'Millennialism in America: Recent Studies', *Theological Studies* 40 (1979): 510–31.

16. Dietrich G. Buss, 'Meeting of Heaven and Earth: A Survey and Analysis of the Literature on Millennialism in America, 1965–1985', *Fides et Historia* 20, no. 1 (1988): 5–28.

17. Ted Daniels, *Millennialism: An International Bibliography* (New York, 1992).

18. The text of the 'Model' appears in countless locations including Edmund S. Morgan (ed.), *Puritan Political Ideas, 1558–1794* (Indianapolis, IN, 1965), pp. 75–93.

19. For a critical discussion of the literature dealing with the motives driving the founders of the Bay colony, see Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988), pp. 81–119, 192–236.

20. See Conrad Cherry (ed.), *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1971).

21. Bozeman, *Ancient Lives*, p. 92. Matthew 5:14 reads, 'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid' (King James Version). See also Andrew Delbanco, 'The Puritan Errand Re-Viewed', *Journal of American Studies* 18 (1984): 343–60.

22. See Pauline Moffitt Watts, 'Prophecy and Discovery: On the Spiritual Origins of Christopher Columbus's "Enterprise of the Indies"', *American Historical Review* 90 (1985): 73; and Alain Milhou, 'Apocalypticism in Central and South American Colonialism', in Stephen J. Stein (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 3 (New York, 1998), pp. 3–7.

23. Milhou, 'Apocalypticism', pp. 10–11; and John L. Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, CA, 1970).

24. The bibliography focusing on millennialism and apocalypticism in Great Britain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is extensive. Representative literature includes Peter Toon (ed.), *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology, 1600 to 1660* (Cambridge, 1970); Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530–1645* (Oxford, 1979); and James Holstun, *A Rational Millennium: Puritan Utopias of Seventeenth-Century England and America* (New York, 1987).

25. Hooker, 'Preface to Fresh Suit Against Ceremonies', in George H. Williams, Norman Pettit, Winfried Herget and Sargent Bush, Jr (eds), *Thomas Hooker: Writings in England and Holland, 1626–1633* (Cambridge, MA, 1975), pp. 300–1, 327–8.

26. See Stephen J. Stein, 'Apocalyptic in Early New England', in C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (eds), *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature* (Manchester, 1984), pp. 268–9.

27. For example, see Cotton Mather, *The Churches Resurrection, or the Opening of the Fift and Sixt verses of the 20th Chap. Of the Revelation* (London, 1642); *The Powring Out of the Seven Vials; or an Exposition of the 16. Chapter of the Revelation* (London, 1642); and *An Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter of the Revelation* (London, 1655).

28. Bozeman, *Ancient Lives*, p. 236.

29. Danforth, *A Brief Recognition of New-Englands Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA, 1671).

30. Noyes, *New-Englands Duty and Interest* (Boston, 1698), p. 43.

31. Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom* (Cambridge, MA, 1666).

32. Johnson, *Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England* (London, 1654), p. 236.

33. Sewall, *Phaenomena Quaedam Apocalyptica Ad Aspectum Novi Orbis Configurata: Or, Some few Lines towards a description of the New Heaven As It makes to those who stand upon the New Earth* (Boston, 1697).

34. Edmund Sears Morgan, *Roger Williams: The Church and the State* (New York, 1967); W. Clark Gilpin, *The Millenarian Piety of Roger Williams* (Chicago, IL, 1979); Emery J. Battis, *Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1962); James Cooper, 'Anne Hutchinson and the "Lay Rebellion" Against the Clergy', *New England Quarterly* 61 (1988): 381–97; and Marilyn J. Westerkamp, 'Anne Hutchinson, Sectarian Mysticism, and the Puritan Order', *Church History* 59 (1990): 482–96.

35. Philip F. Gura, *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620–1660* (Middletown, CT, 1984), pp. 130–44. See also J. F. Maclear, 'New England and the Fifth Monarchy: The Quest for the Millennium in Early American Puritanism', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 32 (1975): 223–60.

36. Gura, *A Glimpse*, pp. 144–52; and Carla Gardina Pestana, *Quakers and Baptists in Colonial Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1991).

37. David S. Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World: Heresy to Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1985), 154–77.

38. Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: Or, the Ecclesiastical History of New-England* (London, 1702), p. 1.

39. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* [1937] (New York, 1959), pp. 171–2.

40. Middlekauff, *The Mathers*; Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven, CT, 1975); Richard F. Lovelace, *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather* (Washington, DC, 1979); Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York, 1984); and John S. Erwin, *The Millennialism of Cotton Mather: An Historical and Theological Analysis* (Lewiston, NY, 1990).

41. Reiner Smolinski (ed.), *The Threefold Paradise of Cotton Mather: An Edition of 'Triparadisus'* (Athens, GA, 1995), p. 5.

42. Niebuhr, *Kingdom of God*, p. 143.

43. C. C. Goen, 'Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology', *Church History* 28 (1959): 25–40.

44. Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1966), pp. 60–1.

45. James West Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought: Eighteenth-Century New England* (New Haven, CT, 1977), pp. 129–32, 151–7.

46. Heimert's volume appeared before the publication of Jonathan Edwards's manuscripts, including his 'Notebook on the Apocalypse'.

47. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven, CT, 1977). See also his essay, 'Millennialism and Popular Religion in the Early Republic', in Leonard I. Sweet (ed.), *The Evangelical Tradition in America* (Macon, GA, 1984), pp. 113–30.

48. Davidson, *Logic of Millennial Thought*, pp. 28–33.

49. Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, WI, 1978).

50. Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756–1800* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 75.

51. See, for example, Allen C. Guelzo, 'God's Designs: The Literature of the Colonial Revivals of Religion, 1735–1760', in Harry S. Stout and D. G. Hart (eds), *New Directions in American Religious History* (New York, 1997), pp. 141–72; Gordon S. Wood, 'Religion and the American Revolution', in ibid., pp. 173–205; and Philip Goff, 'Revivals and Revolution: Historiographic Turns since Alan Heimert's Religion and the American Mind', *Church History: Studies in Christianity & Culture* 67 (1998): 695–721. Each of these essays cites the voluminous literature that has addressed issues raised by Heimert's volume.

52. Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA, 1990) pp. 195, 216–18.

53. See Morgan's review in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 24 (1967): 454–59; and Mead's review, entitled 'Through and Beyond the Lines', in *Journal of Religion* 48 (1968): 274–88.

54. Stephen A. Marini, *Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England* (Cambridge, MA, 1982), p. 47. See also Clarke Garrett, *Spirit Possession and Popular Religion: From the Camisards to the Shakers* (Baltimore, MD, 1987), pp. 170–1.

55. See also the highly suggestive study of John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* (Cambridge, MA, 1994).

56. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*; and Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers 1815–1860* (New York, 1978) pp. 24–7.

57. Diary of Bradford King, entry for 28 November 1830, cited in Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815–1837* (New York, 1978), p. 109.

58. Edward Beecher, 'The Nature, Importance, and Means of Eminent Holiness Throughout the Church', *The American National Preacher* 10 (1835): 193–4, cited in Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, p. 225.

59. See Donald W. Dayton, 'Millennial Views and Social Reform in Nineteenth Century America', in M. Darrol Bryant and Donald W. Dayton (eds), *The Coming Kingdom: Essays in American Millennialism & Eschatology* (Barrytown, NY, 1983), pp. 131–47; and Daniel Walker Howe, 'Protestantism, Voluntarism, and Personal Identity in Antebellum America', in Stout and Hart (eds), *New Directions*, pp. 206–35.

60. James H. Moorhead, *American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War 1860–1869* (New Haven, CT, 1978). See also the collection of essays in Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson (eds), *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York, 1998).

61. Edwin Scott Gaustad (ed.), *The Rise of Adventism: A Commentary on the Social and Religious Ferment of Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (New York, 1974); Michael Barkun, *Crucible of the Millennium: The Burned-Over District of New York in the 1840s* (Syracuse, NY, 1986); Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler (eds), *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington, IN, 1987); Ruth Alden Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia, PA, 1987); and Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York, 1994), pp. 93–133.

62. Gary Land (ed.), *Adventism in America: A History* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1986).

63. Charles H. Lippy, 'Millennialism and Adventism', in Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams (eds), *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience: Studies of Traditions and Movements*, 3 vols (New York, 1988), Vol. 2, p. 831.

64. David T. Arthur, 'Joshua V. Himes and the Cause of Adventism', in Numbers and Butler (eds), *The Disappointed*, pp. 36–58.

65. Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (New York, 1976).

66. Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven, CT, 1992). The 1845 version of the 'Millennial Laws' is printed in Edward Deming Andrews, *The People Called Shakers: A Search for the Perfect Society*, 2nd edn (New York, 1963), pp. 249–89.

67. Klaus Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing, MI, 1977; J. F. C. Harrison, *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism 1780–1850* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1979), pp. 176–92; and Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism (*Urbana, IL,1993).

68. See Stein, *Shaker Experience*, pp. 66–76.

69. See Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York, 1979), pp. 36–7. For an interesting contemporary reassessment of this tradition, see Massimo Introvigne, 'Latter Day Revisited: Contemporary Mormon Millenarianism', in Robbins and Palmer (eds), *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem*, pp. 229–44.

70. See Harold Wisbey, *Frontier Prophetess: Jemima Wilkinson, the Publick Universal Friend* (Ithaca, NY, 1964); F. Gerald Ham, 'The Prophet and the Mummyjums: Isaac Bullard and the Vermont Pilgrims of 1817', *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 56 (1973): 290–9; Karl J. R. Arndt, *George Rapp's Harmony Society, 1785–1847* (Rutherford, NJ, 1972); Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19th-Century America* (New York, 1994); and Spencer Klaw, *Without Sin: The Life and Death of the Oneida Community* (New York, 1993). See also Robert S. Fogarty, *Dictionary of American Communal and Utopian History* (Westport, CT, 1980); and Donald E. Pitzer (ed.), *America's Communal Utopias* (Chapel Hill, CT, 1997).

71. Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York, 1970).

72. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York, 1980); and Robert Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession* (New York, 1995), pp. 108–33. See also Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion*, Vols 1–2 (Chicago, IL, 1986, 1991).

73. See, for example, Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore, MD, 1991); Norris Magnuson, *Salvation in the Slums: Evangelical Social Work, 1865–1920* (Metuchen, NJ, 1977); and Jean Miller Schmidt, *Souls or the Social Order: The Two Party System in American Protestantism* (Brooklyn, NY, 1991).

74. James H. Moorhead, 'Apocalypticism in Mainstream Protestantism, 1800 to the Present', in Stein (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 3, p. 97.

75. Sandeen, *Roots of Fundamentalism*, pp. 67–8.

76. Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 88–90.

77. Dwight L. Moody, 'The Return of the Lord', cited in Sydney E. Ahlstrom, 'From Puritanism to Evangelicalism: A Critical Perspective', in David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge (eds), *The Evangelicals: What They Believe, Who They Are, Where They Are Changing* (Nashville, TN, 1975), p. 283. See also Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875–1982* (New York, 1987).

78. *The Scofield Reference Bible* was published by Oxford University Press. It was expanded in 1917 and revised in 1967.

79. Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York, 1997). See Carpenter's appendix in which he sketches 'Fundamentalists' Views of Prophecy and the End of Time' (pp. 247–9).

80. See M. James Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Toronto, 1985); and R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York, 1986), pp. 128–49.

81. See Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (New York, 1979); and Edith L. Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1993).

82. Robert Weisbrot, *Father Divine and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Urbana, IL, 1983); and Jill Watts, *God, Harlem U.S.A.: The Father Divine Story* (Berkeley, CA, 1992), pp. 135 ff.

83. C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Boston, MA, 1973); and Martha F. Lee, *The Nation of Islam: An American Millenarian Movement* (Lewiston, NY, 1988).

84. See, for example, Billy Graham, *Approaching Hoofbeats: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (Waco, TX, 1983).

85. For example, see Graham's *World Aflame* (New York, 1965), and *Approaching Hoofbeats*. On Van Impe, see Stephen J. Stein, 'Marketing the Apocalypse: The Direct-Mail Ministry of Jack Van Impe', in Ray B. Browne and Marshall Fishwick (eds), *Preview 2001+: Popular Culture Studies in the Future* (Bowling Green, OH, 1995), pp. 169–87.

86. On Lindsey, see Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, p. 5, and elsewhere; O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, pp. 134–71; and Daniel Wojcik, *The End of the World as We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* (New York, 1997), pp. 37–59.

87. See, for example, Douglas Robinson, *American Apocalypse: The Image of the End of the World in American Literature* (Baltimore, MD, 1985); and Lois Parkinson Zamora, *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary U.S. and Latin American Fiction* (Cambridge, 1989).

88. Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* (New York, 1998), p. 47.

89. Randall Balmer, 'Apocalypticism in America: The Argot of Premillennialism in Popular Culture', *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 13 (1988): 425–8.

90. See Stephen D. O'Leary, 'Apocalypticism in American Popular Culture: From the Dawn of the Nuclear Age to the End of the American Century', in Stein (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 3, pp. 392–426.

91. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, p. 142.

92. See Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994); and Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America: Millenarian Movements from the Far Right to the Children of Noah* (Syracuse, NY, 1997).

93. Wojcik, *End of the World*, pp. 60–96; Sandra L. Zimdars-Swartz, 'The Marian Revival in American Catholicism: Focal Points and Features of the New Marian Enthusiasm', in Mary Jo Weaver and R. Scott Appleby (eds), *Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America* (Bloomington, IN, 1995), pp. 213–40; and Michael W. Cuneo, 'The Vengeful Virgin: Case Studies in Contemporary American Catholic Apocalypticism', in Robbins and Palmer (eds), *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem*, pp. 175–94, and his chapter entitled 'Mystical Marianists and Apocalypticists', in *The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism* (New York, 1997), pp. 121–77.

94. Robert N. Bellah, 'Civil Religion in America', *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 96, no. 1 (1967): 1–21; Winthrop S. Hudson (ed.), *Nationalism and Religion in America: Concepts of American Identity and Mission* (New York, 1970); and Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, *American Civil Religion* (New York, 1974).

95. Aviezer Ravitsky, 'The Messianism of Success in Contemporary Judaism', in Stein (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 3, 205–6.

96. Michael F. Brown, *The Channeling Zone: American Spirituality in an Anxious Age* (Cambridge, MA, 1977).

97. Susan J. Palmer, 'Woman as World Savior: The Feminization of the Millennium in New Religious Movements', in Robbins and Palmer (eds), *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem*, pp. 159–60.

98. See David Chidester, *Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Bloomington, IN, 1988); Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?*: and Wojcik's chapter entitled 'Emergent Apocalyptic Beliefs about UFO's and Extraterrestrial Beings', in *End of the World*, pp. 175–208.

99. See Sandra Schanzer, 'The Impending Computer Crisis of the Year 2000', in Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (eds), *The Year 2000: Essays on the End* (New York, 1997), pp. 263–72; and Robert G. Clouse, Robert N. Hosack and Richard V. Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual: A Once and Future Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1999), pp. 187–8.

100. I take these adjectives, 'progressive' and 'catastrophic', from Catherine Wessinger's essay entitled 'Millennialism With and Without the Mayhem', in Robbins and Palmer (eds), *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem*, pp. 47–59. Wessinger writes: 'I suggest that we drop the terms premillennialism and postmillennialism, because they are no longer adequate to communicate about millennialism' (p. 51).

11. Millennium Prophecy and the Energies of Social Transformation

1. Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 7–8.

2. For a narrative account of this event see Stephen B. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: A Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, 1982), pp. 362–4. The speech is recorded on video in the documentary *King: Montgomery to Memphis* (Pyramid Films, 1970).

3. Brown's contributions to his own sanctification are documented in the materials reprinted in Richard Warch and Jonathan F. Fanton (eds), *John Brown* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1973). For contemporaneous accounts that co-operated with Brown's own work to validate his prophetic stature, see, among many others, James Redpath's bestseller *The Private Life of Capt. John Brown* (Boston, MA, 1860) and Henry David Thoreau's 1859 'A Plea for Captain John Brown'.

4. This case is brilliantly argued in Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Word that Moved America* (New York, 1995). On the composition of 'The Battle Hymn' see Florence Howe Hall, *The Story of the Battle Hymn of the Republic* (New York, 1916).

5. See Claude Andrew Clegg, III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York, 1997), p. 30.

6. The Millerite phenomenon is considered from many angles in Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler (eds), *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century* (Knoxville, TN, 1993). On Ellen White see Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: Ellen G. White and the Origins of Seventh-Day Adventist Health Reform* rev. edn (Knoxville, TN, 1992). The complex cultural origins of Sojourner Truth's prophetic career are documented in Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol* (New York, 1996).

7. The phrase comes from the vivid account of early Shakerism by the bitter former convert Valentine Rathbun, *An Account of the Matter, Form, and Manner of a New and Strange Religion …* (Providence, RI, 1781), p. 12. The best modern study of the Shakers is Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven, CT, 1992).

8. See James Mooney, 'The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890',

Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology (Washington, DC, 1896). An abridged version of this study was issued by the University of Chicago Press in 1965. The quotation comes from the so-called 'messiah letter', the written form in which Wovoka's vision was carried to distant tribes. Cited in ibid., p. 780.

9. *The Confessions of Nat Turner, the Leader of the late Insurrection in Southampton, Va., as fully and voluntarily made to Thomas R. Gray* (Baltimore, MD, 1831). Quotations from the *Confessions* are followed by page numbers from the reprinting in Henry Irving Tragle (ed.), *The Southampton Slave Revolt of 1831: A Compilation of Source Material* (Amherst, MA, 1971).

10. For a fuller account of the revolt see Stephen B. Oates, *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion* [1975] (New York, 1990). Tragle's *Southampton Slave Revolt* reprints the relevant source materials.

11. The best brief discussion of slave revolts in the United States is in Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1974), pp. 587–96. This account is given full-length amplification in Genovese's *From Rebellion to Revolution* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1979). On the aftermath of Nat Turner's rebellion see Oates, *Fires of Jubilee*, pp. 105–13; Herbert Aptheker, *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion* (New York, 1966), pp. 57–71 and 74–83; John H. Cromwell, 'The Aftermath of Nat Turner's Insurrection', *Journal of Negro History* 5 (1920): 208–34; and Peter H. Wood, 'Nat Turner: The Unknown Slave as Visonary Leader', in Leon Litwack and August Meier (eds), *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana and Chicago, IL, 1988), pp. 30–6.

12. James McDowell, a Virginia legislator, cited in Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, MA 1993), p. 36; anonymous letter of 17 September 1831 from Jerusalem, Virginia to the Richmond *Constitutional Whig*, reprinted in Tragle, *Southampton Slave Revolt*, p. 91.

13. Aptheker, *Nat Turner*, pp. 74–83.

14. Oates, *Fires of Jubilee*, p. 41.

15. Sundquist provides a full account of issues of authorship and authenticity in the *Confessions* in *To Wake the Nations*, pp. 36–56. His entire discussion, pp. 36–83, forms an essential prelude to any study of the *Confessions*. Quote at p. 43. Sundquist and Wood, 'Nat Turner', explore the implications of the recent discovery that Thomas R. Gray was not (as was long thought) the wealthy lawyer and slaveowner Thomas Gray but rather his son, who had been recently disinherited at the time of Turner's confession. Recent work that casts yet further uncertainty on the relation between the rebellion and the accounts that survive of it is surveyed in Tony Horwitz, 'Untrue Confessions', *The New Yorker,* 13 December 1999, pp. 80–9.

16. See Tragle, *Southampton Slave Revolt*, pp. 45, 53, 93–5 and 134–5.

17. See Turner's reference to the reading of 'certain marks on my head and breast' (p. 306) as proof to his family of his prophetic character. Wood, 'Nat Turner', emphasizes Turner's mother's recent arrival from Africa.

18. See Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Joseph Smith's First Vision* (Salt Lake City, UT, 1980). p. 162.

19. Anonymous letter from Jerusalem, Virginia, 25 August 1831, reprinted in Tragle, *Southampton Slave Revolt*, p. 53.

20. Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias* (New York, 1994), pp. 37–8, 79–84, 92, 96. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana and Chicago, IL, 1988), pp. 175 and 179. John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* (Cambridge and New York, 1994), p. 191.

21. The quotation comes from the *Richmond Enquirer* of 30 August 1831, reprinted in Tragle, *Southampton Slave Revolt*, p. 45.

22. Sundquist makes the case for Turner's religious syncretisms in *To Wake the Nations*, pp. 60–2. But Turner disclaims a belief in conjure, and his rebellion evinces nothing like the failed slave revolt leader Denmark Vesey's reliance on the Angolese witch doctor Gullah Jack.

See Margaret Washington Creel, *'A Peculiar People': Slave Religion and Community Culture Among the Gullahs* (New York, 1988), pp. 150–66.

23. On this conjunction see, among other sources, Yonina Talmon, 'Millenarianism', in D. L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, pp. 349–62; Vittorio Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed* (New York, 1963); Michael Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements Against the Colonial Order* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1979); Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, pp. 605–8; Martha F. Lee, *The Nation of Islam: An American Millenarian Movement* (Syracuse, NY, 1996); and Abbas Amanat, 'The Resurgence of Apocalyptic in Modern Islam', in Stephen J. Stein (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 3 (New York, 1998), pp. 230–64.

24. Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York, 1996). Brown's last message before his execution, a highly selfconscious last testament, is reprinted in Warch and Fanton (eds), *John Brown*, p. 102.

25. On Toussaint l'Ouverture see C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (1938; rev. edn New York, 1963). Genovese's *From Rebellion to Revolution* permits a contrasting of Turner's justificatory strategies with those other slave revolt leaders in the Western hemisphere. Genovese (pp. 28–31) gives particularly interesting evidence of Islam as a basis for slave revolt in Brazil. In the United States, Denmark Vesey and Gabriel Prosser also relied on religious incitement: Gabriel's brother Martin preached to the Prosser conspirators on the divinely-protected escape from bondage in Exodus, and Vesey found a divine command to righteous slaughter in Zechariah 14: 1–3 and Joshua 6: 21. (Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Travellers and Outlaws* [Boston, 1889], pp. 189 and 223–33.) But in both cases these religious justifications were subsidiary to other appeals. Sundquist makes the case for Turner's yoking of religious millennialism with the tradition of the right to revolution descended from the American Revolution (*To Wake the Nations*, pp. 31, 57, 66). But except for Turner's choice of 4 July as the date for his revolt, I see little evidence of this secular tradition in Turner.

26. H. G. and C. J. Hayes (eds), *A Complete History of the Trial of Charles Julius Guiteau, Assassin of President Garfield* (Philadelphia, PA, 1882), pp. 152, 160, 155.

27. Anonymous letter of 17 September 1831, in Tragle, *Southampton Slave Revolt*, p. 95.

28. Oates, *Fires of Jubilee*, pp. 68–9. See also the discussion on p. 168.

29. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, pp. 21, 43, 72, 76.

30. Anonymous letters of 17 and 21 September 1831, in Tragle, *Southampton Slave Revolt*, pp. 100 and 92.

31. Ibid., p. 135.

12. Comparative Millennialism in Africa

1. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, NY, 1982), p. 132. Turner describes *communitas* as (i) existential or spontaneous communitas with its ad hoc character, (ii) normative communitas which is a social system marked by social control; and (iii) ideological communitas of utopian radicalism. This pattern is reflected in the phases of historical marginality as discussed here.

2. The term is that of Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage,* trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago, IL, 1960), pp 15–25, 192.

3. Muhammad Bello's correspondence with al-Kanemíi in Bello, *Infaq al-Maysur*, ed. C .E. J. Whitting (London, 1957), p. 131. Also cited in J. Spencer Trimingham, *A History of Islam in West Africa* (London, 1962), p. 199.

4. Ibn Battuta, *Rihlah*; trans. H. A. R. Gibb, *Travels in Asia and Africa* [1929] (London, 1957), pp. 324–5.

5. *Shari'a in Songhay*, trans. John Hunwick (London, 1985), pp. 66–7.

6. Turner, *Ritual Process*, p. 166.

7. So said al-Ghazali. Duncan Black Macdonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* [1909] (London, 1985), pp. 222–3.

8. Cited in Mervyn Hiskett, *The Sword of Truth: The Life and Times of the Shehu Usuman dan Fodio* (New York, 1973), p. 66.

9. Ibid., p. 67.

10. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago, IL, 1960), p. 192.

11. 'Uthman dan Fodio, *Bayan wujub al-hijra 'ala 'l 'ibad*, ed. and trans. F. H. El-Masri (Khartoum, London, 1978), p. 52.

12. For a discussion of this mahdist theme in dan Fodio's career see M. A. Al-Hajj, 'The Thirteenth Century in Muslim Eschatology: Mahdist Expectations in the Sokoto Caliphate', *Research Bulletin, Centre of Arabic Documentation* (Ibadan) 3, no. 2 (July 1967): 100–15.

13. Hannah Arendt, commenting on the phenomenon of the Boer sense of isolation as 'the first European group to become completely alienated from the pride which Western man felt in living in a world created and fabricated by himself', argues that rootlessness is characteristic of race organization, of the hatred of territorial limitation. Rootlessness inspired in this instance 'an activistic faith in one's divine chosenness'. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland, OH, New York, 1964), pp. 194, 196–7.

14. Boubacar Barry, 'L'Expansion du Fouta Jallon vers la côte et les crises politiques et sociales dans la Sénégambie meridionale au cours de la première moitié du XIXème siècle', unpublished manuscript (n.d.), pp. 14–15.

15. E. W. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* [1887] (Edinburgh, 1967).

16. Ibid., p. 206.

17. Cited in Monica Wilson, 'Co-operation and Conflict: The Eastern Cape Frontier', in Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (eds), *The Oxford History of South Africa*, Vol. i, *South Africa to 1870* (Oxford, 1969), p. 257.

18. Ibid., p. 258.

19. Ibid., p. 259.

20. The phrase 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' comes from Joshua 9: 21.

21. Cited in J. Du Plessis, *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa* (New York, 1911), p. 187.

22. The London Missionary Society (LMS) encountered somewhat similar responses to its presence in Asia, Polynesia and Africa. Thus when the LMS came among the South Sea islanders, King Rihoriho of Tahiti, whose father saw the first missionaries arrive, relented. 'I must first be taught,' he said. 'Afterwards, when we see the effect upon myself, my people may have teachers too.' Tom Hiney, *On the Missionary Trail, a Journey Through Polynesia, Asia, and Africa with the London Missionary Society* (New York, 2000).

23. Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 37–8.

24. Ibid., p. 45.

25. Cited in J. D. Y. Peel, '"For Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things?" Missionary Narratives and Historical Anthropology', *Comparative Study of Society and History* 37, no. 3 (July 1995): 603.

26. J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (London, 1968), p. 91.

27. Ibid., pp. 91–2.

28. On Garrick Braide see Godwin Tasie, *Christian Missionary Enterprise in the Niger Delta: 1864–1918* (Leiden, 1978).

29. See Harold W. Turner, *History of an African Independent Church: Church of the Lord (Aladura)*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1967), Vol. i, p. 23.

30. David Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements* (Nairobi, 1968).

31. Cited in Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*, p. 275. For an examination of the so-called Shaker element in African and other non-Western forms of religious practice, see I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (London, 1971).

32. Cited in Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1978), p. 129. Excerpt in Robert L. Ferm (ed.), *Issues in American Protestantism: A Documentary History from the Puritans to the Present* (Gloucester, MA, 1983), pp. 83–95. The excerpt leaves out the reference to blacks (p. 88).

33. An early and penetrating survey of these new groups in Africa, undertaken in the 1960s, identified some six thousand of them. See Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*.

34. See Christian G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana* (London, 1962). Also Kofi Asare Opoku, 'Changes within Christianity: The Case of the Musama Disco Christo Church', in Edward Fasholé-Luke, Richard Gray, Adrian Hastings and Godwin Tasie (eds), *Christianity in Independent Africa*,(London and Bloomington, IN, 1978), pp. 111–21.

13. Is There a Chinese Millenarian Tradition?

1. On the White Lotus, see Susan Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813* (New Haven, CT, 1976); Daniel L. Overmyer, *Folk Buddhist Religion: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China* (Cambridge, MA, 1976); and Barend J. ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (Leiden, 1992).

2. On the Yellow Turbans, see Howard S. Levy, 'Yellow Turban Religion and Rebellion at the End of the Han', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 76, no. 4 (October–December 1956); Paul Michaud, 'The Yellow Turbans', *Monumenta Serica* 17 (1958); and Paul Demieville, 'Philosophy and Religion from Han to Sui', in Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (eds), *The Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge, 1978), Vol. 1, ch. 16.

3. A shortcut to the abundant literature on this topic is my 'Chinese Millenarian Traditions: The Formative Age', *American Historical Review* (forthcoming). The essential introduction to the emergence and evolution of Daoism is Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism : Growth of a Religion* (Stanford, CA, 1997); the essential complement to this introduction is Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley, CA, 1997). On Daoist messianism, see Anna K. Seidel, 'Taoist Messianism', *Numen* 31, no..2 (December 1984): 161–74.

4. See Erik Zürcher, '"Prince Moonlight": Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism', *T'oung-pao* 86, nos 1–3 (1982): 1–59.

5. Barend J. ter Haar, *Ritual and Mythology of the Chinese Triads: Creating an Identity* (Leiden, 1998), particularly chs 6 and 7.

6. The basic narrative of the Taiping movement is presented in Franz Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion: History and Documents*, Vol. 1 (Seattle, WA, 1966); Philip A. Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion', in Twitchett and Fairbank (eds), *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 10, Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911*, Part I, pp. 264–317; and Jonathan D. Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York, 1996). Spence's volume does not claim to offer a narrative overview of the movement as a whole. In the overview which follows, I offer neither an original narrative, nor a critique of other narratives. As such, I note only specific facts or statements which might not be found in the basic treatments just mentioned.

7.   The Qing, China's last dynasty, was ruled by Manchus, a non-Chinese ethnic group originally from present-day China's northeastern provinces.

8. See Immanuel C. Y. Hsû, *The Rise of Modern China* (New York, 1990), p. 76.

9. On the Boxers, see Joseph W. Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley, CA, 1987).

10. See Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, p. 50.

11. Ibid., p. 95.

12. Ibid., p. 144.

13. On the Taipings' relationship to the Triads, see Elizabeth J. Perry, 'Taipings and Triads: The Rôle of Religion in Inter-Rebel Relations', in Janos M. Bak and Gerhard Benecke (eds), *Religion and Rural Revolt: Papers Presented to the Fourth Interdisciplinary workshop on Peasant Studies* (Manchester, 1984), pp. 342–53.

14. Cited in Vincent Y. C. Shih, *The Taiping Ideology* (Seattle, WA, 1967).

15. Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, p. 325.

16. See Robert P. Weller, 'Historians and Consciousness: The Modern Politics of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom', *Social Research* 54, no. 4 (Winter 1987): 737.

17. This figure is meant to be suggestive, not scientific; I carried it out via computer, checking only titles.

18. R. G. Tiedemann is preparing a comprehensive guide to Western-language sources on the Taipings.

19. Prescott Clarke and J. S. Gregory provide invaluable excerpts from this rich literature in their *Western Reports on the Taiping: A Selection of Documents* (Honolulu, 1982). Stanford University Press reissued one of the best of the books of this period, Thomas Meadows, *The Chinese and Their Rebellions*, in 1963.

20. On the Chinese literature, see Weller, 'Historians and Consciousness'; and Teng Ssu-yu, *Historiography of the Taiping Rebellion* (Cambridge, MA, 1962).

21. The indigenous inhabitants of Taiwan are not Chinese, but rather a people of Micronesian origin. The majority of the Chinese population on Taiwan migrated from mainland Fujian and Guangdong in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and quickly came to outnumber the indigenous groups. The native tongues of these Chinese migrants include a number of Fujianese, Cantonese and Hakka dialects. By 'Taiwanese' I refer to this group. Mainlanders, who followed Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan in the late 1940s, speak Mandarin, in addition to the local dialects of their native places. Relations between mainlanders and Taiwanese have been tense.

22. See the English-language version of one of Jen's important works, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (New Haven, CT, 1973), and the review of one of his major Chinese works (*Taiping tianguo dianzhi tongkao*) by Hsiao Kong-ch'uan, in *Journal of Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1958–59): 490–1.

23. This list could be expanded, but the subsequent review might well become exceedingly technical.

24. Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, p. 3.

25. The *locus classicus* for the thesis that Hong was mentally ill is P. M. Yap, 'The Mental Illness of Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, Leader of the Taiping Rebellion', *Far Eastern Quarterly* 13 (1954): 287–304.

26. Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, p. 77.

27. Ibid., p. 77.

28. Ibid., p. 107.

29. Ibid., pp. 136–7.

30. Ibid., pp. 195–6.

31. Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion', p. 264.

32. On Fairbank, Kuhn, and the nature of American historiography of China, see Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York, 1984).

33. This argument is found both in Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion', pp. 267ff., and Kuhn,

'Origins of the Taiping Vision: Cross-cultural Dimensions of a Chinese Rebellion', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 87, no. 3 (New Haven, CT, 1967). The quote is from 'The Taiping Rebellion', p. 267.

34. Kuhn, 'Origins of the Taiping Vision', p. 350.

35. Robert Weller had already written *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion* (Seattle, WA, 1987), and has since coedited, with Meir Shahar, *Unruly God: Divinity and Society in China* (Honolulu, 1996).

36. Weller, *Resistance, Chaos, and Control in China: Taiping Rebels, Taiwanese Ghosts and Tiananmen Square* (Seattle, WA, 1994), pp. 38–40.

37. Ibid., pp. 50–1.

38. One section of Barend ter Haar's article, 'China's Inner Demons: The Political Impact of the Demonological Paradigm', in *China Information* XI, nos 3–4 (1996): 54–88. This journal, published in Holland, was unavailable to me as I was writing this chapter. Ter Haar kindly sent me his final draft via email attachment. I am thus unable to provide page numbers to the published version.

39. Ter Haar's most comprehensive treatment of the demonological paradigm is in his *Ritual and Mythology of the Chinese Triads*, pp. 221–62; his most compact and accessible treatment is 'Messianism and the Heaven and Earth Society: Approaches to Heaven and Earth Society Texts', in David Ownby and Mary S. Heidhues (eds), *'Secret Societies' Reconsidered: Perspectives on the Social History of Early Modern South China and Southeast Asia* (Armonk, NY, 1993), pp. 153–76.

40. The West was the traditional home of saviour-gods in numerous rebel and messianic traditions in China, and the Taipings greeted Lord Elgin, a British diplomat who visited Nanjing in 1858, as the messiah – much to Elgin's consternation.

41. Kuhn, 'Origins of the Taiping Vision', p. 324.

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14. Millennialism in Modern Iranian History

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4. Peter Smith, 'Motif Research: Peter Berger and the Baha'i Faith', *Religion* 8: 210–34.

5. Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, 3 vols (Leiden, 1975–91).

6. John Walbridge 'The Babi Uprising in Iran: Causes and Issues', *Iranian Studies* 29, nos 3–4 (Fall/Winter): 339–62.

7. Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago, IL, 1984).

8. Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany, NY, 1985).

9. J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford, 1971).

10. Fadl Allah Ruzbihan Khunji, *Persia in A.D. 1478–1490*, trans. and ed. V. Minorsky (London, 1957), pp. 65–7.

11. Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, p. 80.

12. Hasan Rumlu, *Ahsan at-Tavarikh*, 2 vols (Baroda, 1931–34) p. 32.

13. Anon, *Jahangusha-yi Khaqan: (Tarikh-i Shah Isma'il): ta'lif dar 948–955 H*, ed. and intro. Allah Datta Muztar (Islamabad, 1986), pp. 36, 128; Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, p. 81.

14. Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, *Risalih'i Raj'at* (Lucknow, n.d.), p. 5.

15. Ibid., p. 6; Mulla Muhammad Baqir, *Tadhkirah-i Mulla majlisi* (Lahore, 1911), pp. 28–9.

16. Majlisi, *Risalih'i*, p. 9.

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18. Juan R. I. Cole, 'Rival Empires of Trade and Imami Shi'ism in Eastern Arabia, 1300–1800', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (1987): 177–204; Juan R. I. Cole, 'The World as Text: Cosmologies of Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i', *Studia Islamica* 80 (1994): 1–23; Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent* (Syracuse, NY, 1982); Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, 4 vols (Paris, 1971–72).

19. Mrs Meer Hasan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns of India* [1832] (Karachi, 1978), pp. 76, 80–81; Juan R. I. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh 1722–1859* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1988), pp. 100–1.

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21. Denis MacEoin, 'From Shaykhism to Babism', PhD dissertation, Cambridge University, 1979; Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850* (Ithaca, NY, 1989).

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25. Kashani in Anon, *Kitab-i*, pp. 91–2.

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46. Amanat, 'Resurgence*'*, p. 256.

47. Arjomand, 'Millennial Beliefs', p. 230. Rinehart, *Revolution and Millennium*, p. 139.

48. Arjomand, 'Millennial Beliefs', p. 230.

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51. Ibid., p. 235.

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55. Fields, *Revival and Rebellion*, pp. 273–5.

15. The Middle East in Modern American Popular Prophetic Belief

1. Portions of this initial section of the chapter are more fully elaborated in Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), esp. the Prologue, 'The Hidden World of Prophecy Belief', pp. 1–18.

2. Two interesting efforts to document the way prophetic belief actually functions in specific social settings are A. G. Mojtabai, *Blessed Assurance: At Home with the Bomb in Amarillo, Texas* (Boston, MA, 1986) and Charles B. Strozier, *Apocalypse: On the Psychology of Fundamentalism in America* (Boston, MA, 1994).

3. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, pp. 87–8.

4. Angus Reid Group Cross-Border Survey, 'Canada/U.S. Religion and Politics', p. 80. Printout of results, dated 11 October 1996. My thanks to Professor Mark Noll, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, for making these data accessible to me. The poll included a scientifically selected sample of 3,000 Americans and 3,000 Canadians. Among self-designated 'conservative Christians', belief in a coming battle of Armageddon approached 70 per cent.

5. Helen Lee Turner and James L. Guth, 'The Politics of Armageddon: The Impact of Premillennialism and Dispensationalism on the Political Orientation of Southern Baptist Clergy', paper delivered at annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, 14– 16 April 1988, p. 5. (Based on a survey conducted in 1986–87.)

6. James Davison Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1983) contains many valuable data on the economic, educational, gender, racial and geographic patterns in the ranks of American evangelicalism, where biblical literalism and interest in Bible prophecy is most deeply rooted.

7. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, pp. 3–4.

8. Hal Lindsey, *Planet Earth—2000 A.D.* (Palos Verdes, CA, 1994); Jack Van Impe, *2001: On the Edge of Eternity* (Dallas, TX, 1996); Ed Dobson, *The End: Why Jesus Could Return by A.D. 2000* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1997).

9. Unless otherwise indicated, this section draws upon Chapter 6 of Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, 'The Final Chastisement of the Chosen' (pp. 181–224). Readers seeking further details and documentation may consult that chapter and its supporting documentation in the end notes (pp. 389–407).

10. Linda Seidel, 'Apocalypse and Apocalypticism in Western Medieval Art', in Bernard McGinn (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 2 (New York, 1998), pp. 467–506, esp. pp. 474–5.

11. Roberto Rusconi, 'Antichrist and Antichrists', in McGinn (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 2, pp. 287–325, esp. pp. 293–309; Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More,* p. 51.

12. Bernard McGinn, 'Apocalypticism and Church Reform, 1100–1500', in McGinn (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 2, p. 102 (Columbus); Rusconi, 'Antichrist and Antichrists', p. 311 (Luther quote); Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, pp. 61–2, 102.

13. An alternative, and very ancient, interpretive tradition holds that Antichrist himself will be a Jew – a blasphemous impostor posing as the true Jewish messiah, Jesus Christ. The televangelist Jerry Falwell attracted attention in January 1999 when he embraced this view, claiming in a news conference that the Antichrist would be a Jew and further – given the imminence of the Rapture and the Great Tribulation – that the Evil One was probably already alive today as a young Jewish male. Amid a flurry of media comment, Falwell apologized to anyone offended by his comments, though he did not retract his belief.

14. Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994).

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16. Kenneth M. Setton (General Ed.), *A History of the Crusades, I, The First Hundred Years*, ed. Marshall W. Baldwin (Madison, WI, 1969), pp. 263–5, 337; H. H. Ben-Sasson (ed.), *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, MA, 1976), pp. 413–14. It should be noted that some local bishops tried to protect the Jews of their city, and that some Crusade leaders, notably St Bernard of Clairvaux, a leading proponent of the Second Crusade (1147–49), spoke out against the attacks on the Jews.

17. Lindsey, *Planet Earth–2000 A.D.*, p. 90.

18. I Thessalonians 5: 3. See, for example, 'Beware of the Soviets', *Bible Prophecy News* (January–February–March 1991): 6.

19. Van Impe, *2001*, p. 44.

20. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, pp. 327–31.

21. Moishe Rosen, *Beyond the Gulf War: Overture to Armageddon?* (San Bernardino, CA, 1991), p. 133.

22. Charles H. Dyer, *The Rise of Babylon: Sign of the End Times* (Wheaton, IL, 1991), pp. 165–6.

23. Joseph Chambers, *A Palace for the Antichrist* (Green Forest, AK, 1996), p. 95.

24. Van Impe, *2001*, pp. 56–7, 68.

25. Dave Hunt, *A Cup of Trembling: Jerusalem and Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, OR, 1995), pp. 196, 199, 202.

26. Lindsey, *Planet Earth—2000 A.D.*, ch. 10, 'The New Islamic Threat', pp. 169–84; Lindsey, *The Final Battle* (Palos Verdes, CA, 1995), pp. 4–5, 12, 70. Reiterating the point in *Apocalypse Code* (Palos Verdes, CA, 1997), Lindsey listed 'the rise of Islamic nations ... with their relentless pursuit of Jerusalem and Israel's destruction' as key signs of the approaching end (p. 68).

27. Lindsey, *Apocalypse Code*, p. 120.

28. Dyer, *Rise of Babylon*, p. 166; Lindsey, *Apocalypse Code*, p. 121.

29. Lindsey, *Apocalypse Code*, p. 121.

30. Hunt, *A Cup of Trembling*, p. 306.

31. Grant R. Jeffrey, *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny*, new edn (Toronto, 1997), pp. 111–12, 114, 269–70.

32. Dobson, *The End*, pp. 43, 47, 55.

33. Ibid., pp. 128, 129.

34. Hal Lindsey, *Blood Moon* (Palos Verdes, CA, 1996).

35. John Hagee, *The Beginning of the End: The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the Coming Antichrist* (Nashville, TN, 1996), pp. 4–5, 19–21, 23–4, 91–2; Hagee, *Final Dawn Over Jerusalem* (Nashville, TN, 1998), p. 16. *The Beginning of the End* made the *New York Times*' non-fiction bestseller list, with sales of more than half a million copies in its first year.

36. Hagee, *Beginning of the End*, pp. 25, 27.

37. Ibid., pp. 141–56, passim, quoted passages pp. 143, 150, 155.

38. Hagee, *Final Dawn Over Jerusalem*, pp. 12, 122–3.

39. Ibid., pp. 34–75 passim; 113–23.

40. Ibid., pp. 141, 142.

41. Ibid., p. 131.

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REVELATION

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FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION:
Detail from Sandro Botticelli's illustration
of *Inferno XVIII* from Dante's *Divine Comedy*,
'Eighth circle: punishment of panders,
seducers and flatterers' (c. 1484-1487).
Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett.

BACK COVER ILLUSTRATION:
A depiction of paradise from a 15th-century
Perso-Uighur manuscript of *Mi'raj-nama*
(the Book of Ascension) produced in Herat.
In his miraculous night journey to the
Heavens, the Prophet, riding the fantastic
mount Buraq and guided by the angel Gabriel
(Jibra'il), visits the heavenly garden and its
beautiful *houris* (Bibliothèque Nationale,
manuscrit supplément, turc 190).