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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Handmaids of the Apocalypse: Queen Gerberga, Empress Adelaide, and the Ottonian Tenth Century

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Abstract

Gerberga of Saxony, the sister of Otto I of Germany and wife of Louis IV of France, receives frequent scholarly mention in relation to a treatise by Adso of Montier-en-Der circa 950–954. The topic of this short work, presented as a letter to Gerberga in answer to a question she posed to the monk, was the life of the Antichrist, that fearful servant of Satan who would appear before Christ's Second Coming, lead whole nations into damnable error, and kill many who would not apostatize before being defeated by Jesus himself at his return. The treatise eventually become the foundation of centuries of Christian apocalyptic thought. But despite her prominence in the letter, Gerberga has received no sustained examination by historians regarding her interest and promotion of apocalyptic thought beyond being a recipient of Adso's letter. At most, scholars tend to see Gerberga as if through the eyes of Adso, that is, as a nervous queen anxious to be reassured that a universal evil is not hiding just around the corner. Such views—wholly unintentional but nevertheless present—do her a great disservice and misunderstand the motivations of both Gerberga and Adso present in the letter, as well as Gerberga's younger, apocalyptically minded in-law, the empress Adelaide. This essay examines Gerberga's life not simply as it relates to Adso's work but in relation to the very personal, family-driven politics of both East and West Francia in the tenth century. When placed in her proper context, we find Gerberga was not merely a passive recipient of apocalyptic ideas for a brief period in the early 950s but was an active patron whose interest shaped imperial politics for generations.

Keywords: History; Medieval History; Apocalypse; Church History; Middle Ages

Apocalyptic speculation, never absent from Christian thought, became more noticeable and visibly insistent in Latinate Europe throughout the tenth century. In the previous century, a woman named Thiota made a stir around Mainz when she predicted the world would end in 847, though ecclesiastical officials quickly enforced silence on her.[1] Despite the frequent raids from Scandinavians throughout Europe in the ninth

[1] *Annales Fuldenses: Sive, Annales regni Francorum orientalis*, ed. Friedrich Kurze and G. H. Pertz, *MGH SSRG* 7 (Hanover, Germany: 1891), 36–37; Timothy Reuter, trans., *The Annals of Fulda: Ninth-Century Histories, Volume II* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 26–27. For discussion of Thiota (aka Theoda or Theuda) as a woman preacher, see Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish*

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century, these peoples do not seem to have been conflated to the dreaded Gog and Magog, the Antichrist's personal army.[2] Charlemagne certainly thought of his realm as a *castra Dei*, a stronghold that served the divine both spiritually and militarily. Nevertheless, apocalyptic language was mostly used for routine rhetorical and political ends. No apocalyptic discourse is without context and significance for the society in which it is expressed, yet, in following the opinion of Augustine of Hippo, Carolingian discussion of the apocalypse was almost never urgent, instead being reserved for catechetical training and as encouragement for peaceful unity within the empire.[3]

The tenth century, by contrast, was full of apocalyptic concerns. Abbo of Fleury relates several experiences with apocalyptic speculation in the second half of the century, much of which seemed to emanate from Lotharingia.[4] Date setters proliferated, with some people expecting that the conjunction of the Annunciation and Good Friday would inaugurate the End Times. Such a conjunction happened four times throughout the century: in 908, 970, 981, and 992.[5] Byrhtferth of Ramsey, Abbo's student, internalized his master's distaste for imminent apocalyptic beliefs and wrote against date setting in 1011.[6] Such denouncements are themselves evidence for continuing interest. The year 1000 was seen as a significant milestone in cosmic history. While contemporaries were not nervously sheltering in their homes as December 999 ended (as nineteenth-century historians once believed), the millennial anniversary of Christ's Incarnation produced feelings of rising apocalyptic potential in some on either side of the year 1000,[7] including for Thietland of Einsiedeln,[8] Ælfric of Eynsham, Archbishop Wulfstan of York, Rodulfus Glaber, and even Empress Adelaide and her

Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500–900 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 143–148.

[2]James T. Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 180, 213–214.

[3]E. Ann Matter, "Alcuin's Questions-and-Answers Text," *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 45, no. 4 (1990): 645–656, esp. 656; Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3–14; Bernard McGinn, "Introduction: John's Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Mentality," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 3–19.

[4]See Abbo Floriacensis, *Apologeticus*, in PL 139, cols. 461–472, at 471–472.

[5]See Elizabeth Dachowski, *First among Abbots: The Career of Abbo of Fleury* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 52–56; David C. Van Meter, "Christian of Stavelot on Matthew 24:42 and the Tradition that the World Will End on March 25th," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 63 (1996): 68–92, especially at 68–70; and Richard Landes, "The Fear of the Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. Van Meter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 243–270, especially at 252–254.

[6]See Byrhtferth of Ramsey, *Byrhtferth's Manual*, ed. and trans. S. J. Crawford (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), 232–243; and William Prideaux-Collins, "'Satan's Bonds Are Extremely Loose': Apocalyptic Expectation in Anglo-Saxon England during the Millennial Era," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, ed. Landes, Gow, and Van Meter, 289–310, especially 302–303.

[7]See Richard Landes, "Introduction: The *Terribles espoirs* of 1000 and the Tacit Fears of 2000," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, ed. Landes, Gow, and Van Meter, 3–15.

[8]The attribution of Thietland of Einsiedeln as the author of a commentary on Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians has been called into question: see Hartmut Hoffmann, *Die Würzburger Paulinenkommentare der Ottonenzeit* (Hannover, Germany: Hahnsche Buchhandlun, 2009), 41–42. Keeping this potential caveat about authorial identity in mind, however, I have chosen to use Thietland for convenience, as most modern scholarship still refers to him as the author.

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grandson, Emperor Otto III (discussed below). Even Charlemagne played a role in these anxieties, being increasingly invoked in apocalyptic notions of a returned emperor who would restore what had been lost and bring Christendom to a new and glorious age before Christ's return.[9] The year 1000 was, therefore, not so much a singular moment of apocalyptic anxiety but rather an epochal pivot point. This era of apocalyptic interest stretched decades on either side of the millennium, during which speculators could image how and when to expect prophetic events to begin playing out (while also readjusting their math if earlier estimations proved inadequate).[10]

Perhaps the most significant moment in apocalyptic speculation, which encouraged many later speculations, was the composition of a treatise on the Antichrist. Written sometime between 949 and 954, the *De ortu et tempore de Antichristo* by Adso of Montier-en-Der proved to be one of the most popular and influential nonscriptural sources for apocalyptic thought for the rest of the Middle Ages.[11] It popularized in Western Europe an idea, first formulated in the seventh century by a Syrian Christian known to scholars as Pseudo-Methodius, that would become known as the Last World Emperor prophecy. This held that the greatest ruler Christendom had ever seen would unite all believers, retake Jerusalem, and abdicate his authority directly to Christ by laying down his crown on the Mount of Olives. Immediately thereafter, the Antichrist would arise, and the apocalypse proper would begin.[12]

All this is well known to historians, as is the name of the addressee of Adso's letter-cum-treatise, Queen Gerberga of Saxony, the sister of Otto I and wife of Louis IV. Most scholars who work with Adso's *De ortu* in any meaningful way never fail to mention her.[13] Unfortunately, lip-service seems to be all Gerberga has received among recent scholars interested in tenth-century apocalyptic thought. Even those

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[9]See Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks, and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[10]The Burgundian monk Rodufus Glaber (c. 980–c. 1046), "the historian of the Millennium," for example, wrote apocalyptically about the years surrounding 1000 and 1033, but he did not hold those precise dates as divine deadlines. Those who had set precise dates had hitherto proven incorrect. Rather, they indicated eras of increased motivation to improve society with the End in mind, which provoked activity as diverse as increased church-building projects to the burning of heretics in Orleans. See Rodulfus Glaber, *Histories*, in *Rodulfus Glaber Opera*, ed. and trans. John France, Neithard Bulst, and Paul Reynolds (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1989), xxiii, lxiv, 116–117, and 138–151. Apocalyptic interest can also be seen in the artistic achievements of the illustrated versions of the *Beatus Apocalypse* (a commentary, originally written by Beatus of Liébana in the late eighth century with many later extant illustrated versions dating to as early as the tenth century) and the *Bamberg Apocalypse* (created c. 1000–1002 during Otto III's reign, who as we will see below had strong familial and person interests in the apocalypse). See Richard K. Emmerson, *Apocalypse Illuminated: The Visual Exegesis of Revelation in Medieval Illustrated Manuscripts* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018), especially 36–82.

[11]Daniel Verhelst, ed., *De ortu et tempore Antichristi necnon et tractatus qui ab eo dependent*, CCCM 45 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1976), 3–19.

[12]Palmer, *Apocalypse*, 107–119.

[13]In the years on either side of 2000, there was quite a number of monographs, edited volumes, and essays interested in apocalyptic themes in general and the year 1000 in particular. See, for example, Michael Frasseto, ed., *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Responses to the Turning of the First Millennium* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. Van Meter, eds., *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Richard Landes, "On Owls, Roosters, and Apocalyptic Time: A Historical Method for Reading a Refractory Documentation," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 49 (1995): 49–69; and Sylvain Gouguenheim, *Les fausses terreurs de l'an mil: Attente de la fin du monde ou approfondissement de la foi?* (Paris: Picard, 1999), among many others.

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sensitive to women's absence in much of our sources and historical discussion have not given Gerberga the attention (I argue) she deserves as a vector in the creation and propagation of Adso's apocalyptic thought.[14] Only Simon MacLean has seemed to give Gerberga the direct attention she deserves, examining the ways her connections to, sponsorship of, and intellectual and spiritual involvement with monastic reformers—first through her first husband, Duke Gislebert of Lotharingia, and then her second, King Louis IV of West Franica—help explain the origins of Adso's apocalyptic letter to her.[15] Without treading the same intellectual grounds as MacLean, I hope to complement his work on understanding the origins and implications of tenth-century apocalyptic beliefs for the Ottonians, especially among women elites. Therefore, rather than a traditional examination of Adso's *De ortu*, looking at the author and his writings, this essay instead examines the life and family connections of Queen Gerberga, centering her, the person to whom Adso wrote his influential work, in order to better understand the appeal and spread of interest in the Antichrist and the Last World Emperor prophecy in tenth-century Frankish and Germanic society. While Adso deserves the attention he has gained as an apocalyptic speculator, a complete picture of his contributions is impossible without correcting this not-insignificant lacuna. With MacLean, I argue here that Adso's letter to Gerberga, unlike what some scholars have maintained, was written to someone the monk considered a capable and highly motivated queen whose interest in apocalyptic matters was based not on fear or idle curiosity but on her own belief in her family's prophetic importance. Adso catered to this belief in his treatise. More than being a passive recipient, however, Gerberga encouraged this apocalyptic worldview in others, especially in her younger, twice-over in-law, Empress Adelaide, who in turn passed it on to her grandson, Otto III. No doubt, without Adso, no apocalyptic letter would have been written; but the same goes for Gerberga.

I. Carolingian Foundations for an Ottonian Apocalypse

The empire (albeit one between emperors) into which Gerberga was born circa 913 had been founded by Charlemagne 100 years earlier and was, in many ways, a chimera: Frankish warriors, Italian alliances, Germanic custom, Roman religion, English scholars, and subjects from a variety of demographic, linguistic, and cultural origins, with both peaceful and violent contacts from the Iberian Peninsula and the North Sea to the Bosphorus and the Middle East. Without question, under the Carolingians, ideas from disparate origins met and comingled in ways that would leave many lasting effects on European society. The same is true for apocalyptic speculations.

For example, scholars—notably Richard Landes and James Palmer[16]—have remarked upon the importance of *computus* (date calculation) in the Carolingian world and its connection to apocalyptic anxieties. Charlemagne himself was crowned

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

[15]Simon MacLean, "Reform, Queenship and the End of the World in Tenth-Century France: Adso's '*Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist*' Reconsidered," *Revue belge de philology et d'histoire* 86, nos. 3–4 (2008): 645–675.

[16]Richard Landes, "Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography, 100–800 C.E.," in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. W. D. F. Verbeke, D. Verhelst, and A. Welkenhysen (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press,

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emperor by Leo III not, as we usually think, on Christmas in AD 800 but rather in AM II 6000, according to an older *anno mundi* (year of the world) calendar. Such, argues Landes, might well have been an expression of messianic hope for the future age.[17] Whether one calls them "hopes" or "anxieties," however, these Carolingian interests never materialized into grand apocalyptic movements. Dates, however, can only take us so far in understanding how the Carolingian court understood and made use of apocalyptic ideas.

The architect of Charlemagne's intellectual renewal was Alcuin of York (ca. 735–804), whose British traditions studied the apocalypse but kept chiliastic, imminent apocalyptic predictions at arm's length.[18] Alcuin was a direct heir of Bede (himself an avid, albeit orthodox, apocalyptic thinker)[19] and his educational legacy, being trained under Egbert, the archbishop of York, himself a student of Bede's. Alcuin's efforts led to the formation of a palace school at Aachen in which Christian humanism and biblical exegesis rooted the study of more classical disciplines as he attempted to impart his insular-flavored religious morality into continental culture.[20] Like his intellectual forebears, Alcuin was no apocalyptic alarmist. In two works on John's Apocalypse attributed to him—a question-and-answer manual and an unfinished commentary—interest remains focused not on an impending doomsday but on the virtues of the church expressed through its teaching and preaching.[21] According to E. Ann. Matter, unlike similar works, Alcuin's manual was hardly a finely crafted theological text concerned with difficult problems for the highly educated scriptural scholar: "The function of this text, instead, is catechetical."[22] Even incidents like the coming of the Vikings and the destruction of Lindisfarne might provoke feelings of patient, Job-like suffering or later give way to lamentations, like Jeremiah, but they did not cause Alcuin or those associated with him to link this scourge from the north with Antichrist's prophetic armies.[23] Pseudo-Methodius's work, which would one day inspire Adso, was indeed present at this time, having already been imported from the East and translated into Latin by the end of the eighth century, but the text was only simplified during the ninth century. It was never adapted to fit recent events into predictions of an imminent future.[24] Nevertheless, the apocalypse still interested some, and it held (as always) special rhetorical value that could be adapted for many occasions.[25] For their political situation, the Carolingians had a different strategy for apocalyptic rhetoric.

1988), 137–211; James T. Palmer, "Calculating Time and the End of Time in the Carolingian World, c.740–820," *The English Historical Review* 126, no. 523 (Dec. 2011): 1307–1331.

[17]Landes, "Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled," 191–203.

[18]James T. Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World, 690–900* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2009), 3.

[19]Bede, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation*, trans. Faith Wallis (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 1, 39–50; Peter Darby, *Bede and the End of Time* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012), 42–51.

[20]Douglas Dales, *Alcuin: Theology and Thought* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke and Co., 2013), 194–195.

[21]Sarah Van Der Pas, trans., *Consolamini Commentary Series: Alcuin of York on Revelation, Commentary and the Questions and Answers Manual* (West Monroe, LA: Consolamini Publications, 2016). While Alcuin's hand may not have written either of these works, they were certainly the result of his Continental efforts and thus demonstrate the relative quietness of apocalyptic anxieties among ninth-century Carolingian authors.

[22]Matter, "Alcuin's Questions-and-Answers Text," 656.

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

[24]Palmer, *Apocalypse*, 119–126.

[25]O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 3–14; McGinn, "Introduction," 3–19.

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Among the chief concerns within the Carolingian Empire after its founding was its continued existence as a reasonably unified and defensible entity. This was sought and achieved on many fronts: militarily, politically, economically, administratively, culturally, and religiously.[26] Militarily, as early as King Pippin (r. 751–768), the Carolingian realm expanded through conquest but was maintained by establishing or gaining control of permanent fortifications in or near hostile regions. These *castra* defended the borders while providing the Carolingian court (lay and ecclesiastic) a useful metaphor for spiritual bulwarks within a proselytizing empire.[27] Religious ceremony —communally and privately—was important in strengthening Carolingian armies' morale, cohesion, and discipline. Those who carried out these ceremonies thus performed a vital military function.[28] At the same time, as clergy witnessed and became part of the military effort, martial ideas were incorporated into religious, and especially monastic, contexts. Connecting spiritual combat and martial combat did not originate with the Carolingians (such metaphors date back to Saint Paul), but the ninth century saw an increase of so-called *milites Christi* among both monks and soldiers.[29] The *castra Dei* developed as part of a political theology in Charlemagne's court that combined these two spheres. This theology referenced and used apocalyptic content, holding that the forces of evil would increase in their attacks against the people of God as the End Times approached. By correcting sins, stamping out heresies (especially the then-current Spanish Adoptionist controversy that held that the man Jesus was adopted as the Son of God rather than being eternally co-equal with the Father, something Alcuin opposed), and removing other inappropriate behavior, the spiritual walls around the *castra Dei* were repaired and built higher in order to face with greater strength any assault from outsider non-Christians. Recourse to apocalyptic threats with the emperor and his ministers protecting the Christian world from armies of the devil, however, was less about prophecy than about correcting contemporary behavior and molding the Carolingian court and society toward one of peaceful unity.[30] This fits well with what has already been said regarding ninth-century uses of continental Apocalypse commentaries as teaching tools. The End Times were rhetorically important for a society founded and maintained by military and religious pressure. From a purely apocalyptic perspective, however, these were conservative mentalities, albeit ones pregnant with potential. Thus, during the heyday of ninth-century Carolingian power, there were no omens to suggest that the monarch would one day bear a unique, apocalyptic destiny.

As living memory of Charlemagne faded and as the relatively stable reign of Louis the Pious was replaced by a divided empire, however, there began to rise the legend

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

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

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

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

[30]Alberti, "Like the Army of God's Camp," 3–5, 12, 17–20.

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of a golden age lost too soon. As the ninth century wore on, the Carolingian realm fractured into three parts: the strongest were West Francia and East Francia (roughly equivalent to modern France and Germany, respectively) with Lotharingia between them. In the early tenth century, starting with Henry the Fowler (r. 919–936), Saxons replaced the Franks as dynastic rulers in the eastern kingdom. Nevertheless, as Charlemagne's past glories became a memory, his status rose higher the more distant he seemed. Religious houses and secular nobles sought to associate themselves with both him and his age. The resulting legend cast him as a towering presence worthy of a place within the apocalyptic drama.[31] But Charlemagne's death in 814 meant he had passed out of the realm of the merely human and entered the realm of divine agent. Christian apocalyptic thought before the tenth century was loath to think of living humans as principal actors in the apocalyptic drama.[32] This would change by the mid-tenth century, and the question of what a contemporary (rather than previous) monarch could do in light of approaching apocalyptic events would find new answers and new champions.

While the ninth century remained relatively calm regarding apocalyptic speculations, the tenth took a different course. As the Carolingian dynasty ended, first in the east and later in the west, the political imagination of rulers and those who served them combined with apocalyptic theories long incubating within their borders. The most important document for the Latin world to come out of this context was a treatise on the Antichrist himself. Though it has long been the topic of scholarly examination, it must be situated in its historical and political moment. This means examining the family that dominated the formerly eastern Carolingian lands throughout the tenth century.

In 919, the Kingdom of East Francia accepted Henry the Fowler as its ruler, despite his Saxon rather than Frankish ancestry. Henry was not the first East Frankish king outside the Carolingian dynasty. Conrad I had broken that tradition in 911. The first monarch of the Liudolfing dynasty, Henry would be followed by three successive kings and emperors named Otto and one final Henry. Due to the number of Ottos ruling in the east, the era Henry inaugurated is sometimes known as an "Ottonian" century (running 919–1024) rather than a "Liudolfing" one. Those benefiting from Henry's bloodline, however, were not limited to a narrow line of royal successions. In addition to Otto I, called "the Great," who became king of East Francia in 936 and emperor in 962, Henry's children included Gerberga, wife to King Louis IV; Hedwig, wife of Hugh the Great, duke of the Franks and count of Paris, and mother of Hugh Capet, the first Capetian king; Bruno, archbishop of Cologne and duke of Lotharingia; Henry, duke of Bavaria; and Thankmar, who was the first of his adult siblings to die (in 938).[33] Though Otto I's reign was not without challenges—internally and externally—he was able to suppress revolts, turn back invasions, and pacify East Frankish elites, thus maintaining and even expanding his authority as king and later emperor. It was in great part Henry I's well-placed children and relations that allowed the Ottonian line

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

[32]My dissertation, "Final Preparations: The Emergence of Human Agency in Christian Apocalyptic Speculation in the 10th and 11th Centuries" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2020), is devoted to this issue.

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

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to survive as long as it did, despite lacking a Carolingian pedigree.[34] While contemporary elites may have been forgiving of a non-Carolingian monarch, it must not be forgotten in what follows that the Liudolfings lived in the shadow of Charlemagne's accomplishments, both real and imagined.

One of Henry's children who occupied a unique place between Carolingian and post-Carolingian dynasties was Gerberga (ca. 913–969/984). Our knowledge of her stems mostly from her relations to other men: her blood relatives, like Otto; her first husband, Gislebert, Duke of Lotharingia (ca. 890–939); her second husband, King Louis IV Outremer of France (920/921–954); her children, including Louis's heir, Lothair (941–986); various charters, in which she sometimes made gifts in either her own name or on behalf of the minor Lothair; and correspondence she received from a monk (later abbot) of Montier-en-Der named Adso. Gerberga, however, not only lived through but participated in several of the chief issues occupying the men around her. For example, in the late 930s, a rebellion broke out against Otto I. Its participants included Gislebert of Lotharingia, Otto's brother Henry, and Louis IV. Otto ultimately triumphed, though in the process his brother-in-law Gislebert died, widowing Gerberga. Possibly to help solidify peace with Otto's western counterpart, Gerberga wed Louis in 939. According to MacLean, Gerberga may well have taken the initiative in contracting a marriage to Otto's enemy, Louis.[35] In any case, the mood between the two kings did not radically change overnight, but eventually, and thanks to Louis's queen, an alliance developed.[36] A text from the 1070s holds Gerberga responsible for convincing her first husband to join the rebellion against Otto, though the reliability of this version of events has been questioned.[37] Nevertheless, as we shall see, it correctly identifies Gerberga as someone concerned with and capable of provoking significant political undertakings. And as the years passed and her influence rose following her second marriage, Gerberga and Louis's relationship with Otto became increasingly amicable, even profitable. As MacLean says, "Friendship between the two kings was both cause and consequence of Gerberga's growing prominence."[38]

II. Adso of Montier-en-Der and the *De ortu et tempore antichristi*

Before exploring Gerberga's life as queen, which few scholars interested in apocalyptic matters do, it is necessary to discuss the letter Adso wrote to her concerning the Antichrist. After examining its intersection of apocalyptic and political matters, we will return once again to Gerberga, and the content and context of the apocalyptic treatise will be better understood through the lens of the life of its intended recipient. Contrary to predominant scholarship, we will see that Adso addressed the letter to a woman who believed in being actively involved in shaping European affairs rather than someone content to amuse herself with hypothetical or alarmist inquires.

[34]For the Liudolfings, see Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*; and for the imagined Carolingian shadow over them, see Gabriele, *Empire of Memory*.

[35]Simon MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 53–54.

[36]MacLean, "Reform, Queenship and the End of the World," 467–468.

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

[38]MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, 55.

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Adso himself was part of the Gorze reform movement that spread throughout Lotharingia starting in 933.[39] In 935, Alberic of St. Evre (itself reformed along Gorze's model the year before) became abbot of Montier-en-Der. When he relocated, Alberic took a young but promising monk with him named Adso. It was a good choice. Adso proved himself quite the author, producing not just his *De ortu* but several hagiographies. He eventually became abbot of Montier-en-Der (968–992), though he would also hold temporary abbatial positions at other monasteries to help with reform and oversight. Adso died in 992 while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem.[40] An intrinsic part of the Gorze reform movement he helped spread was the belief that monks, rather than seeking lives of holy isolation, served God best when they participated in the world around them as guides and exempla.[41] Therefore, Adso not only sought to give advice to leading political figures but would have believed that such council could and should lead to positive changes in society as the recipient took appropriate steps as a proper Christian.

Versions of Adso's prophetic biography of the Antichrist (described by scholars as an anti-*vita*) exist in 171 manuscripts dating from as early as the eleventh century scattered among French, German, English, Austrian, Hungarian, Czech, and Italian collections, testifying to the letter's popularity.[42] This would become the standard version of the Antichrist prophecy for centuries, with medieval authors relying upon it, directly or indirectly, when discussing the archvillain of the apocalypse. Internal clues from the work—originally in the form of a letter to Gerberga in response to an unknown inquiry she posed to the monk regarding the Antichrist—indicate it was written sometime

[39]MacLean, "Reform, Queenship and the End of the World," 653.

[40]Kassius Hallinger, *Gorze-Kluny: Studien zu den monastischen lebensformen und gegensätzen im hochmittelalter* (Rome: Herder, 1950), 62; Anne Wagner, *Gorze au XIe Siècle: Contribution á l'histoire du monachisme bénédictin dans l'Empire* (Turnhout, Belgium: Artem-Brepols, 1996), 31; Verhelst, *De ortu*, v–vi; Richard Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes (989–1034)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 280; John Nightingale, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform: Lotharingia c. 850–1000* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 16–19, 144–145; Constance Bouchard, ed., *The Cartulary of Montier-en-Der, 666–1129* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 129–130, no. 39. While Hallinger's monumental *Gorze-Kluny* proposed Cluny and Gorze represent two self-consciously separate, competing, and unified approaches to reform, it is either greatly qualified or completely rejected by current scholarship, yet it remains invaluable as a starting point for Gorze historians. Furthermore, scholars disagree whether the figure known as Adso of Montier-en-Der has been confused with multiple people. See Monique Goullet's introduction in Adso Dervenensis, *Opera Hagiographica*, CCCM 198, ed. Monique Goullet (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2003), vii–xxvi; and MacLean, "Reform, Queenship and the End of the World," especially at 669–673. Since these (unconfirmed) doubts about the identity and life of Adso do not inherently question that the author of the letter to Gerberga was from Montier-en-Der, a Gorzian monastery, I have chosen to follow the older scholarship—as does Matthew Gabriele, "This Time. Maybe This Time. Biblical Commentary, Monastic Historiography, and Lost Cause-ism at the Turn of the First Millennium," in *Apocalypse and Reform from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. Matthew Gabriele and James T. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 2019), 187—and assume, at my own risk, that Adso lived a respectably (but not outrageously) long life from ca. 910 to 992.

[41]See Phyllis Jestice, "The Gorzian Reform and the Light under the Bushel," *Viator* 24 (1993): 51–78.

[42]Verhelst, *De ortu*, 3–19. Verhelst's work is the definitive scholarly edition. English translations of the letter exist but are, I find, wanting, such as is in John Wright, trans., *The Play of Antichrist* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1967), 100–110, which renders "pro filiorum vestrorum incolumitate" as "for your children's safety," failing to maintain the purposeful reference to her "sons," which conveyed not simply a mother's love of children but a queen's concern about her heirs; and Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 82–87, which omits the prologue completely.

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between 949 (when Louis IV's brother Rorico, mentioned in the text as having ecclesiastical rank, was made a deacon) and 954 (the year Louis, who is presumed alive in the letter, died).[43] The letter has two main parts: first, an introduction addressed to the queen; second, the *vita* proper. The biography starts with the Antichrist's birth as a member of the Hebrew tribe of Dan and proceeds to discuss his upbringing by sorcerers; rise to power through deception, conquests, and persecution of Christians; and, finally, downfall. For his description of the life of the Antichrist, Adso relies heavily upon the work of Pseudo-Methodius, which came down to him through a Latin redaction, as the text makes explicit use of the Last World Emperor prophecy,[44] complete with the abdication of imperial authority to Christ on the Mount of Olives just before the Antichrist's advent.[45]

Scholars familiar with Adso and Pseudo-Methodius know all this. But there is another tradition imbedded within Adso's text beside that of the Syrian. Just as the *De ortu* includes Byzantine political prophecies, so, too, does it contain elements of Hiberno-English conceptions of apocalyptic preaching. The Antichrist himself would come to power due, in part, to his ability to preach and recruit preachers to deceive those throughout the world susceptible to his lies. He would corrupt those in authority before spreading his will through preachers to the rest of Christendom.[46] Taken by itself, this could simply reflect the old conception of the Antichrist as a master manipulator. But this is not all. For the lifelong reformer Adso, preaching itself is a battlefield upon which to fight evil. Adso makes clear that preaching is a weapon for believers. Before the Antichrist arrives, and in order to prevent the faithful from falling prey to his lies, the Two Witnesses of Revelation 11 (presumed here and many other medieval texts to be Enoch and Elijah) will arrive to preach, strengthening the people of God and training them for spiritual warfare against the forces of evil. Their purpose is specifically to prevent the Antichrist coming upon an ignorant and unprepared Christian population who would otherwise be prey to the Antichrist's deceptions and threats. They will train the faithful to fight in a war against the Antichrist with divine weapons.[47] Ultimately, however, the Antichrist will kill both prophets and then proceed to persecute the rest of the Christians until they apostatize or accept martyrdom.[48]

The idea of the Two Witnesses leading the faithful during the End Times was an old trope by the tenth century, but the notion that they will prepare the faithful to fight against the Antichrist—whether physically or merely spiritually, however futilely—was an innovation. In essence, a correct understanding of the apocalypse, provided by preaching, is presented as a direct counter to the Antichrist's machinations, who will send out his own wicked servants to spread false information and convince unprepared Christians to worship him. Indeed, as Adso says, some sinful laymen, clerics, and

[43]Verhelst, *De ortu*, 3.

[44]Though usually called the "Last World Emperor" prophecy, "king" (*rex*) more typically appears for the prophetic figure in the Latin (including in Adso's version), divorcing him from an explicit Byzantine connection. Later authors would eventually reintegrate more overt imperial language into the prophecy. Arguably, anyone claiming universal political authority over Christians might best be described as an emperor rather than a king, hence the naming convention that has developed. For simplicity and scholarly consistency, I have kept this convention, but it should be remembered that those without imperial regalia could still (in theory) aspire to this prophetic office.

[45]The entirety of Adso's letter can be found in Verhelst, *De ortu*, 20–30.

[46]Ibid., 24.

[47]Ibid., 27–28.

[48]Ibid., 28.

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monks are already the Antichrist's servants and precede his arrival.[49] Thus, in answering Gerberga's questions about the Antichrist, Adso's letter is itself an attempt to produce a correct understanding of apocalyptic events so that Gerberga may increase in piety and perform deeds for the benefit of Christ's church, for which Adso praises her.

Despite the warning he provides about how the Antichrist would wage a propaganda war against Christians, an apostacy—which Adso interprets as a political secession from Roman rule—would precede his coming. According to Adso, this time had not yet come thanks to the Franks. Here Adso provides his reinterpretation of the Pseudo-Methodius prophecy. While most of Rome's old territories have fallen into ruin, the Frankish kings were still faithful to Rome—indeed, they held Roman authority by right—and thus the Antichrist's advent was impossible. He then shares with Gerberga that he has it on the authority of learned men (*uero doctores*) that a king of the Franks will soon arise who will be the greatest in history, will expand Frankish territory, and will lay down his crown in Jerusalem before the Antichrist arises.[50] It certainly would have been complimentary for the queen to hear her kingdom and her descendants through Louis would be instrumental in both delaying and ushering in the apocalyptic drama. This also helps explain Adso's prayers for Gerberga's sons in the letter's prologue. There he prays for the safety of Gerberga's sons, saying that if he had the ability, he would increase Gerberga's power as queen ("*totum regnum adquirere*"). As he cannot do that himself, however, he simply prays for her and her sons' wellbeing.[51] As will be seen below when discussing the queen's turbulent conflicts against Hugh the Great, Adso had reason to believe in the years 949–954 that Gerberga would welcome prayers to strengthen her royal authority and for the protection of her and Louis's heirs. As such, there was clearly a political dimension to the apocalypse that Adso imagined and wanted to inform the queen of.

It is often believed that Adso was attempting to calm his queen's apocalyptic anxieties. Jane Schulenburg says that Adso's letter would "serve to *soothe her anxieties*, to assure her that *she need not fear* the imminent end of the world."[52] Such interpretations, however, fail to properly consider Gerberga's life and accomplishments, preferring instead to lay the burden of apocalyptic assertiveness on Adso alone while assuming a frightened woman (already in her late thirties) in need of comfort. While I do not hold that the monk was subject to exorbitant dread about the End Times or was attempting to provoke such in others, from this letter replying to her request for details on the life of the Antichrist, Gerberga would have received ample details upon which to make her own decisions in preparation for an apocalyptic scenario. That is, the letter Adso sent was tailor-made for Gerberga's interests and concerns as queen. MacLean has shown how Gerberga surrounded herself for decades with reform-minded clerics and was interested in intellectual pursuits.[53] She also proved to be a person more

[49]Ibid., 22.

[50]Ibid., 25–26.

[51]Ibid., 20.

[52]Schulenburg, "Early Medieval Women," 241 (emphasis mine). See also Daniel Verhelst, "Adso of Montier-en-Der and the Fear of the Year 1000," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, ed. Landes, Gow, and Van Meter, 81–92, especially 83–85.

[53]MacLean, "Reform, Queenship and the End of the World," 656–657, 671–672, 674–675. Among Ottonian women, Gerberga was not alone in receiving and utilizing a quality education. Perhaps most famous is Hrotswita (or Hrotsvitha) of Gandersheim (c. 935–c. 975), whose plays fused Christian hagiography with classical literary precedents and who composed a history of Otto I. See Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition, 400–1400* (New Haven, CT: Yale University

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than capable of using her hard-won experiences to shape contemporary politics according to her policies and for her family's betterment. Though a rhetorical common-place, Adso had reason to begin his letter by addressing it to "*Excellentissime regine*" (the most excellent queen).[54]

III. Gerberga: A Queen's Life

When Adso wrote his letter sometime between 949 and 954, Gerberga had already endured a number of difficulties as queen of West Francia. Despite her marriage to Louis in 939 (whether with or against the wishes of Otto is unclear), the two kings feuded during the early 940s. They eventually came together amicably in 942, however, though contentions were not entirely erased. Various meetings occurred between the two monarchs or their representatives, but tensions remained for some time. These discords were partially enflamed by Louis's other and perhaps greater foe, Hugh the Great, the Robertian duke of the Franks and count of Paris.[55] Hugh was the king's relative several times over (including eventually by marriage to Gerberga's sister Hedwig). He had been instrumental in securing Louis's ascension to the West Frankish throne in 936. Relations between the two soon soured, however, when it became clear Louis would not be as impressionable as Hugh had initially hoped.[56]

Flodoard of Reims hardly mentions Gerberga in his *Annals* for any reason during this time and never regarding any of the exchanges Louis had with Otto and Hugh. Widukind of Corvey's *Deeds of the Saxons* speaks of her even less. The situation changes, however, in 945. The year before, Gerberga's son Henry, by her first husband, the late Duke Gislebert of Lotharingia, died.[57] This untimely death left Gerberga without male children from her first marriage and thus potentially more politically invested in her second.[58] If that is so, it was fortuitous timing. In 945, Louis found himself the victim of treachery by Northmen, who captured and imprisoned him. A message was sent to the queen, promising Louis's freedom in exchange for his two sons, Lothair (b. 941) and Charles (b. 945). Despite his infancy, Gerberga agreed to deliver the young Charles, but she refused to surrender Louis's heir. Rather than free the king outright, however, the Northmen handed him over to Hugh as part of a deal. Flodoard tells us that, immediately after taking custody of Louis, Hugh sent messengers to Otto but found him unwilling to speak to representatives of the duke, leading to a rift between them.[59]

During Louis's year of imprisonment, Gerberga held the royal residence of Laon against assault until Hugh agreed to release the king. She also sent envoys to her brother, Otto, for military assistance, which he quickly gave. Gerberga was present with Louis and Otto in 946 when they seized Rheims. She remained there while her

Press, 1997), 162–163; and Hrosvit, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Walter Berschin (Munich, Germany: K. G. Saur, 2001).

[54]Verhelst, *De ortu*, 20.

[55]Flodoard of Reims, *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919–966*, ed. and trans. Steven Fanning and Bernard S. Bachrach (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 32–41. For the Latin text, see also Flodoardus Canonicus Remensis, *Flodoardi Annales*, in PL 135, cols. 417–490.

[56]McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 313–319.

[57]Widukind of Corvey, *Deeds of the Saxons*, trans. Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 91.

[58]Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen*, 28–33.

[59]Flodoard, *Annals*, 41–43; *Flodoardi Annales*, 462–464.

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husband and brother invaded Hugh's lands and took revenge on the Northmen.[60] The next year saw increased friendship between the royal brothers-in-law. Louis (and presumably Gerberga, too), celebrated Easter with Otto at Aachen, and they held a *placitum* together the following August. Meanwhile, Hugh's counterattacks stalled. Otto brokered a truce between his two brothers-in-law (Hugh had married Otto and Gerberga's sister Hedwig in 937/938), though with Louis in a stronger position.[61] In the synod that took place in June 948 to settle several conflicts—that between Louis and Hugh as well as the disputed archbishopric of Rheims—the two kings displayed none of the conflict that had existed between them only ten years before. Placing himself under Otto and the synod's judgment, Louis made his case against Hugh's treacheries, which included forcing the king to surrender Laon, despite Gerberga's successful defense of it with soldiers she had gathered. Following other business at the synod—the confirmation of Artoldus as archbishop of Rheims, whom Louis supported against Hugh's candidate—the synod decided to excommunicate Hugh. After Hugh's synodal defeat, Louis and Otto joined military forces together that same year to retake Laon.[62]

Gergerba acted as royal envoy for the kings, joining her brother for Easter in 949 at Aachen—where she also met with envoys from across Europe—and returned to Louis with assurances of continued support, which Otto indeed provided through more years of conflict with Hugh.[63] At the same time, Flodoard mentions Gerberga more frequently when discussing Louis's movements, especially at several locations the king felt needed reinforcements and rebuilding.[64] The conclusion of hostilities between Hugh and Louis, which had seen the duke's supremacy reversed by the queen's defense of Laon and her summoning of her brother into the conflict, finally came in 953 when Hugh requested a truce. To negotiate the peace, he asked to meet personally with Gerberga. The queen (pregnant with twins) met Hugh, received gifts, and subsequently agreed with her husband to end the conflict.[65]

The reconciliation was timely. Just a year later, Louis died while in Rheims after a lengthy illness following a fall from his horse. His death came close on the heels of that of his six-year-old son, also named Louis. Acting quickly, the widowed Gerberga met with Hugh. It seems Gerberga's chief aim was to ensure her son, Lothair, succeeded to the throne of France. In return for supporting the boy (then around thirteen years old), Hugh received lands in Burgundy and Aquitaine.[66] Once more, as had happened with Lothair's father in 936, Hugh got to play kingmaker, albeit this time with Gerberga as an important part of the succession plan. Both seem to have maintained the alliance. Hugh hosted the queen mother and her son for Easter in 955. The duke and young king then campaigned together briefly in Aquitaine.[67]

If Gerberga feared Hugh might make a move against Lothair, it was unnecessary. He certainly had opportunities to turn against Gerberga and Lothair, especially when they were his guests or when the two men were far from the king's power base of Laon, but he never did. Perhaps Gerberga's diplomacy had won him over, which likely included a

[60]Flodoard, *Annals*, 44–45; *Flodoardi Annales*, 464–466.
[61]Flodoard, *Annals*, 45–46; *Flodoardi Annales*, 466–467.
[62]Flodoard, *Annals*, 46–51; *Flodoardi Annales*, 467–474.
[63]Flodoard, *Annals*, 52–53; *Flodoardi Annales*, 474–475.
[64]Flodoard, *Annals*, 54–57; *Flodoardi Annales*, 476–479.
[65]Flodoard, *Annals*, 57–58; *Flodoardi Annales*,479–480.
[66]Flodoard, *Annals*, 59–60; *Flodoardi Annales*, 481.
[67]Flodoard, *Annals*, 61; *Flodoardi Annales*, 482.

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reminder of which of them Otto—who had won a decisive victory against the long-feared Magyars at the Battle of Lechfeld on August 10, 955—had fiercely supported for the last decade. If Hugh had any intention of betraying the young king (and contemporary accounts suggest he did not), he did not live long enough to exploit the situation to his advantage. In 956, Hugh the Great died.[68]

After the deaths of Louis and Hugh, the rest of Gerberga's life is not well documented, but a few pieces of information are quite clear. Her familial-political ties seem to have increased. Not only was she ruling the kingdom closely with Lothair but she took part in endeavors with and on behalf of her siblings. For example, in 957, Gerberga accompanied her son and her sister Hedwig on a campaign to assist her brother Bruno, the archbishop of Cologne and duke of Lotharingia, against a rebellious vassal.[69] The three—Gerberga, Lothair, and Bruno—met together often in the years following Hugh's death, usually on the same side of a conflict. Sometimes they quarreled but never with great hostility, always coming to a peaceable resolution in the end, according to our records. During these mostly amicable meetings, Gerberga figuratively held her son's hand as she and Bruno decided secular and episcopal offices in their adjoining lands, oversaw councils, and coordinated punishment or leniency for rebels.[70] One of the last times we see Gerberga is in 965 accompanying Lothair to Cologne, Bruno's see, to meet Otto. Otto had recently returned from Italy with the title of emperor and then held a *placitum* with his siblings.[71] It was likely at this point when Gerberga negotiated with Emperor Otto for Lothair to marry Emma, Empress Adelaide's daughter by her first marriage. The next year, 966, Lothair and Emma wed.[72] Throughout this time, Gerberga attached her name to several charters and gifts to monasteries—often in a bold style, unusual even for queens-regent—proving Adso's praise of her generosity to religious orders well founded.[73] The date of her death is unfortunately unknown, though she is believed to have passed in 969.[74]

The common view that Adso's letter was meant to comfort an overly fearful queen, while theoretically possible, does not square with the picture of Gerberga that emerges from an examination of her life as Louis's queen and Lothair's regent. In her dealings with her brothers Otto and Bruno, her brother-in-law Hugh, Northmen, and various other political, military, and religious issues that arose, the Gerberga we see from our limited sources was a capable co-ruler with a knack for understanding familial networks while advancing her and her blood relations' agendas. As such, Adso's emphasis on Gerberga's children—after she had withheld Louis's heir from the Northmen and during a time Hugh was still a threat but losing ground due to the queen's activities—as well as the prospect of a future Frankish ruler destined to rise above apostate nobles to become the greatest king in Christian history begins to make more sense as tailored

[68]Flodoard, *Annals*, 62; *Flodoardi Annales*, 483.

[69]Flodoard, *Annals*, 62; *Flodoardi Annales*, 483.

[70]Flodoard, *Annals*, 62–68; *Flodoardi Annales*, 483–488.

[71]Flodoard, *Annals*, 68; *Flodoardi Annales*, 488.

[72]Flodoard, *Annals*, 68; *Flodoardi Annales*, 488.

[73]Simon MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 87–89, especially 86n71. Royal charters at this time generally lacked witness lists: MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, 57. For other charters, see those referencing Gerberga during the reign of Louis IV in *Recueil des Actes de Louis IV Roi de France (936–954)*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris: Imprimiere Nationale, 1914), 78, 88, 103; and during the regency and kingship of her son in *Recueil des Actes de Lothaire et de Louis V Rois de France (954–987)*, ed. Louis Halpen (Paris: Imprimiere Nationale, 1908), 7, 9–10, 14, 23, 26, 31, 61, 64, and 76.

[74]See Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen*, 272; and MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, 51.

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specifically for the queen's personality and recent history. Thus, "comfort" was not Adso's purpose. Rather, it is more likely that he knew the queen to have great expectations for her children specifically and her family in general. Adso, therefore, crafted his version of Pseudo-Methodius's text to appeal, in part, to Gerberga's political and familial ambitions. The apocalypse, in other words, was not just something that would happen to the world. It was something that Gerberga and her family would be able to shape and in a way no one previously had imagined.

IV. All in the Family: Gerberga and the Ottonians

Gerberga's life as queen and regent remained closely tied to political and religious interests, both of which were inseparably linked to familial concerns. It is thus necessary to look briefly at the other members of the Ottonian family who shared Gerberga's interest in a political order to understand how they, too, were informed—though not necessarily dominated—by an apocalyptic awareness. When we look beyond Gerberga, we see that other children of Henry the Fowler pursued courses that, while not alarmist, encouraged the union of politico-religious attitudes about apocalyptic concerns. At this point, it is important to note how Levi Roach described the argument for an apocalyptic worldview for Gerberga's grand-nephew, Otto III (r. 996–1002): that it was one based on an aggregate of individually discardable but cumulatively suggestive elements.[75] The same may be said for the Ottonians as a whole. Like Roach, though apocalyptic examples are individually tenuous, I am convinced the whole provides clarity to the parts. Whether Gerberga was a product of or a guiding influence for the rest of her blood relations on apocalyptic matters is difficult to say with absolute certainly. Nevertheless, she was certainly not alone in her interest, though she might have felt it more keenly than her relatives, as shown in her request to Adso for information on the Antichrist.

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

While campaigning in northern Italy, Otto married Adelaide in 951 after she sought his aid following the death of her husband, Lothair II of Italy. Otto soon brought his new bride home, and the two produced a son, Henry, by the next year. Otto's first wife, Edith of Wessex (d. 946), had given him a son, Liuduolf, in 930. Liudolf and Otto quarreled as a result of his father's second marriage. In 953, Otto named his

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

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newborn son as heir to his kingdom. Before Otto had left for Italy, where he met and married Adelaide, Liudolf had been next in line. Liudolf rebelled against his father and mother-in-law, aided by other nobles, but he died in 957.[76] While Otto and Adelaide's son Henry would not live to take the throne (his younger brother, the future Otto II, would become emperor), it is possible that the presence of an heir to the East Frankish kingdom was on the mind of Adso (if not Gerberga herself) when he wrote prominently about the health and wellbeing of the West Frankish queen's sons in his apocalyptic letter. But if Gerberga may have been anxious about her brother's marriage (and there is no strong evidence she was), it is even more plausible that the two women came to have a noticeable and positive impact on each other.

Scholars have argued that Adelaide, who lived long enough to be regent for her grandson, Otto III, was filled with anxiety about the apocalyptic significance of the times when she died in December 999. Odilo of Cluny, who wrote her *vita* in the early eleventh century, says she frequently spoke of wanting to depart her earthly life and be with Christ as the year 1000 approached.[77] Though desire for a heavenly union is a common trope in *vitae*, historians have seen this declaration in the context of apocalyptic anxieties around the first millennium, with possible influence Adelaide might have had on the young emperor, who is known to have toyed with apocalyptic symbols (see section V below).[78] Within the relevant scholarship, however, I have not found any explicit reference to Gerberga and Adelaide meeting while after the latter's arrival in Frankish territories, nor even what their personal relationship might have been like in any significant way.[79] When Otto returned north of the Alps with his new wife in 952,[80] Gerberga (b. ca. 913) would have been about twice Adelaide's age (b. 931). It is reasonable to imagine the junior queen seeing in her elder sister-in-law a role model: both had been widows; both had suffered at the hands of ambitious neighbors (Hugh for Gerberga, Berengar II of Italy for Adelaide); both had remarried as a result of Otto's military successes, necessitating relocation; both entered their second marriages with children from their first husbands; and (looking ahead) both would be strong regents of formerly Carolingian lands. There was much that would have connected these women on a psychological rather than a merely political level. In this context, Gerberga may have been responsible for instilling apocalyptic ideas into Adelaide, or at least encouraging such inclinations the latter already possessed. It is even plausible that Gerberga shared a copy of Adso's letter with Otto's wife, perhaps in 965 when the monarchs and their families met for the *placitum* at Cologne and Lothar and Emma's marriage plans were finalized. In any case, the addition of Adelaide to the Ottonian family certainly did not dilute apocalyptic interests.

Around the same time Adso wrote his letter, Adelaide was bearing royal children for her new husband, who was enjoying the stability (aside from Liudolf's rebellion) that would lead to his great victory at Lechfeld against the Magyars.[81] Meanwhile,

[76]Flodoard, *Annals*, 57–58, 62; *Flodoardi Annales*, 479–480, 483.

[77]Odilo of Cluny, *Vita Sanctae Adalheidis Imperatricis*, in *Bibliotheca Cluniacensis*, ed. Martinus Marrier and Andreas Quercenatus (Paris: Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1915), 361; in English, see Sean Gilsdorf, trans., *Queenship and Sanctity: The Lives of Mathilda and the Epitaph of Adelheid* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 128–143, at 142.

[78]Schulenburg, "Early Medieval Women," 243; less explicitly, Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 52–53.

[79]See discussion of apocalyptic influence on Otto III below.

[80]Flodoard, *Annals*, 56–57; *Flodoardi Annales*, 478–479.

[81]Flodoard, *Annals*, 57–58, 61, *Flodoardi Annales*, 479–480, 482.

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Gerberga's younger brother Bruno was playing his part in the family's religio-political activities. By the will of Otto I, Bruno, who was already duke of Lotharingia, became Cologne's archbishop in 954.[82] The intersection of religion and politics was important for the Ottonian family. Otto needed the archiepiscopal rank to pass to someone he could trust to perpetuate the family's interests. While controversial at the time,[83] Bruno's appointment to the dual offices accomplished this well.

For Bruno's part, his place as both duke and archbishop, as portrayed and defended by a *vita* by Ruotger,[84] placed him into an indirect but supporting role in the politico-religious web of interests that encouraged the development of thought regarding apocalyptic preparations and the Last World Emperor legend. To be sure, there is no evidence that Bruno himself was apocalyptically minded, but this marriage of secular and ecclesiastical ranks was typical for the Liudolfings, who were anxious to buttress themselves against military revolts while maintaining close relations with religious authorities.[85] Of course, blurring secular and religious lines to one's own advantage was not unique to tenth-century Ottonians. Nevertheless, Bruno's appointment to rule as both duke and archbishop during a time of apocalyptic interest for Gerberga and military anxiety for Otto I—still a year before the Battle of Lechfeld, in which Otto triumphed while wielding the Spear of Longinus, itself a symbol of combined religious and military authority[86]—helped ensure Lotharingia would continue down a religious path amendable to Ottonian interests. As Abbo of Fleury recalled, this path would include a substantial amount of apocalyptic predictions and preaching spreading within and out of Lotharingia throughout the second half of the tenth century.[87] Even if Bruno did not directly encourage such interests, they were ultimately aligned with the politically minded apocalypticism of Gerberga and other Ottonians.

Bruno's elevation meant that an Ottonian firmly controlled Lotharingia both politically and religiously (if one can even wholly separate those two in the tenth century). It also meant that control of northern Europe was consolidated within the hands of three neighboring siblings: Gerberga in the west, Otto in the east, and Bruno between them. Later events show Gerberga, Otto, and Bruno working closely together when dealing with their ecclesiastical and secular subordinates. The council of Cologne at Pentecost in 965, held in part to honor Otto for his recent return from Italy bearing the imperial title, saw the gathering of the entire Ottonian family.[88] According to

[82]Heinrich Fichtenau, *Living in the Tenth Century: Mentalities and Social Orders*, trans. Patrick J. Geary (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 204.

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

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

[85]Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos*, 2–48.

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

[87]Abbo Floriacensis, *Apologeticus*, in PL 139, cols. 461–472, at 471–472

[88]Flodoard, *Annals*, 68; *Flodoardi Annales*, 488; Ruotger, *Vita Brunonis*, 44–45; MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, 75.

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two biographies of Matilda, the long-lived mother of Gerberga, Otto, and Bruno, this meeting was a happy one.[89] Indeed, as discussed previously, Gerberga and Bruno met often to discuss political matters. For most of these matters, the siblings were on the same side. Even when they occasionally found themselves opposed to each other, cooperation was always achieved in deciding both secular and ecclesiastical matters.

Thus, through her and her family's efforts, to those in ecclesiastical office and those interested in the reform of the Benedictine monasteries, like Adso, Gerberga was not merely a layperson whose interest in apocalyptic matters could be seen as the frantic imaginings of the unlearned in need of mild correction. Her devotion to monastic reform, the enlargement of monastic properties throughout her reign as queen (both before and after Louis IV's death), her involvement in synods, and the more-than-generous regard people like Adso had for her show that Gerberga was seen by contemporary religious as worthy to be called the "mother of monks and leader of holy virgins."[90] This title is particularly relevant in light of Gerberga's connections to the reforming movement spreading through Lotharingia at this time, starting with the nunnery of Homblières in October of 949.[91] Moreover, the power she exercised as queen—defending her husband's interests, guiding her son's rule, and even pressing ownership claims of her own[92]—suggests Gerberga was unlikely to be someone of a fragile disposition who fretfully worried about the End Times and was in need of reassurances.[93] Adso's letter about the Antichrist, with its inclusion of the Last World Emperor prophecy and frequent mention of Gerberga's children, was written, in part, as a reflection of the queen's political and religious worldview. As part of a proud royal household, Gerberga believed that she and her family could have an impact on the course of the apocalyptic future. She likely helped impart these same beliefs of agency to her sister-in-law,[94] Adelaide. In any case, Gerberga and her family helped set the stage for the new apocalyptic ideas expressed in Adso's letter to his queen to be shared and evolve over time far beyond the specific context in which it was originally written.

V. The Later Ottonians

For a full understanding of Gerberga's place in the spread of apocalyptic ideas recorded in Adso's letter, it is necessary to look at the next generation of Ottonians, for whom apocalyptic prophecies remained important. Indeed, the family welcomed news of prophecies from both within and without. With the imperial title came additional political ambitions for Otto I as well as apocalyptic awareness at the Ottonian court. Among the former was the desire for a more even standing with the Byzantine East. Thus, in 968, Bishop Liudprand of Cremona (ca. 920–972), acting as emissary for Otto I, arrived in Constantinople in an effort to secure a bride for Otto's son and namesake.[95] The

[89]Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, 83, 117–118.

[90]MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, 64–65; Verhelst, *De ortu*, 20.

[91]MacLean, "Reform, Queenship and the End of the World," 658–659, 666–668.

[92]MacLean, *Ottonian Queenship*, 74–94.

[93]Schulenburg, "Early Medieval Women," 241–243.

[94]Notably, Adelaide was also Lothair's mother-in-law. Her daughter, Emma, from her first marriage was Lothair's queen. Thus, Gerberga and Adelaide were sisters-in-law twice over: once through Otto I and again through their children.

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

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future Otto II would eventually marry Theophanu (ca. 955–991), the niece of Emperor John I Tsimiskes (r. 969–976), in 972. Liudprand's 968 mission, however, would initially prove fruitless. Nevertheless, the account of his trip that Liudprand wrote for both Ottos and Empress Adelaide provided details of the Byzantine court and culture that he thought of interest to his patrons. This included a retelling of political prophecies Liudprand had encountered in Constantinople.

In remarking on a Byzantine campaign into Syria, Liudprand wanted to explain to the imperial family back in East Francia what the Greek motivations were. He explains that the Greeks have books of visions attributed to the prophet Daniel but which the bishop would rather call Sibylline, after the ancient Greek and Roman female oracles. These works purport to predict the sequence, length of years, and notable circumstances for Eastern Roman emperors. Because these books predict that the current emperor, Nicephoros II Phocas (r. 963–969), will be victorious in battle against the Muslims, Liudprand says, the Byzantines have chosen to go to war. The Saracens, however, have access to the same books and will bide their time until the prophecy shifts in their favor.[96] Certainly this is a curious mixture of fate and free will.

Liudprand follows up this general observation about prophecy guiding Byzantine politics by relating another, more specific, prediction that he believes might well apply to the present. According to a Sicilian bishop named Hippolytus, the Greeks believe that a prophecy that "the lion and the cub together shall exterminate the wild donkey" refers to the Byzantine emperor (the lion) and the king of the Franks (the cub) defeating the Saracens (the wild donkey). Liudprand takes offense for this on Otto's behalf. That is, an adult lion and a cub are essentially the same beast and share the same qualities, with age being the only difference. The Greeks, however, are qualitatively different than the Franks, according to Liudprand, with the former morally inferior to the latter. An alliance between Nicephoros and Otto that validated such shameful disparity would be unthinkable.[97]

Liudprand ventures his own interpretation of the prophecy for his patrons. Since the lion and the cub are both ferocious but differ only in age, those should refer to father and son, to Otto I and the future Otto II. The wild donkey, in turn, is Nicephoros himself, of whom Liudprand has few kind things to say. If this prophecy is of any validity to the present, it means that the Ottos will cause Nicephoros's downfall.[98] Liudprand adds that Hippolytus also predicted that the Franks rather than the Greeks would ultimately defeat the Saracens. Then recent victories of Muslims against Greek forces in Sicily seemed to testify to the impossibility of Byzantine supremacy without Frankish intervention.[99] The decisive victory over the Magyars at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955, which ended decades of conflict and was seen as a kind of holy war, must have further convinced Liudprand that Otto I was a divinely blessed warrior-king fighting against ungodly armies.[100]

[96]Liudprand of Cremona, *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, trans. Paolo Squatriti (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 262; Liutprandus Cremonensis Episcopus, *Relatio De Legatione Constantinopolitana*, in PL 136, cols. 924–925.

[97]Liudprand, *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona*, 262–264; *Relatio De Legatione Constantinopolitana*, 925–926.

[98]Liudprand, *Complete Works*, 264, *Relatio De Legatione Constantinopolitana*, 925–926.

[99]Liudprand, *Complete Works*, 265; *Relatio De Legatione Constantinopolitana*, 926–927.

[100]Antoni Grabowski, *The Construction of Ottonian Kingship: Narratives and Myth in Tenth-Century Germany* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 197–221.

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The prophecy Liudprand relates descended in part from the political prophecies of Pseudo-Methodius that, in the seventh century, predicted the rise of a victorious king who would push back seemingly irresistible forces to the east before the onset of the End Times. Lists of rulers were being updated to keep the vision up-to-date and relevant. And even if it was not a primary concern for Emperor Nicephoros's campaign in Syria, people continued to wonder whether the prophecy was nearing fulfillment and what the ruler might do about it.[101] Of course, defeating the Saracens was not the same as inaugurating the apocalypse. But as scholars have suggested, Liudprand nevertheless could have had the apocalypse on his mind as he wrote about the lions, since he was likely involved in a discussion in 944 (during another trip to Constantinople) over the timing of the millennium and the imminent approach of the End Times.[102] Similar prophecies cropped up in Ottonian Italy. The Tiburtine Sibyl, an apocalyptic text with origins in late antiquity, is known to us because of a manuscript dating to the mid-eleventh century. While parts of it have an early origin, the earliest extant version incorporated the Last World Emperor legend while inserting king lists. Most notably, this included a series of three "O" rulers, that is, Otto the Great, his son, Otto II, and his grandson, Otto III.[103] Like the Byzantines, editors in the Ottonian empire periodically updated old legends to keep up with the times. Thus, prophecies centering on the Ottos and their role as providential rulers and military leaders were circulated both within court by men like Liudprand (though not only by men) and in more distant parts of the empire. Certainly, powerful figures attract superlative rhetoric, but the prophetic language and imagery around the Ottonian court was unique in its assurance that an emperor in the West would have some control over and responsibility toward the start of apocalyptic events.

Though Emperor Nicephoros died in 969, paving the way for better East–West relations and the marriage between Otto II and Theophanu, Otto I never became the conquering lion of the Saracens that Liudprand had hoped.[104] Nevertheless, the successes Otto I had throughout his life meant that his son and grandson would enjoy the imperial title after him. These successes overcame the sudden death of Otto II (d. 983) and the difficulties of his leaving his heir, Otto III, a child emperor until 996. But the original Otto did not control events from beyond the grave, and his past victories could not dissuade living opponents from seeking his grandson's power. Instead, the relative stability of the later Ottonians rests in large part on the women of the court, including Otto II's Byzantine bride, Theophanu, and his mother, Adelaide. Neither empress felt much kindness toward the other while Otto II lived. Fortunately, their relative cooperation after his death to ensure a stable throne for his heir kept the two women on a shared endeavor, and the era was quite good for women with connections to the imperial court in general.[105] Theophanu thus held

[101]Palmer, *Apocalypse*, 198–199.

[102]Ibid., 199–200.

[103]Ibid., 200–201; McGinn, *Visions*, 43–44, 49–50. See also Ernst Sackur, ed., *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen: Pseudomethodius, Adso und Die Tiburtinische Sibylle* (Halle, Germany: Niemeyer, 1898), 177–187.

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

[105]Karl Leyser, "*Theophanu divina gratia imperatrix augusta*: Western and Eastern Emperorship in the Later Tenth Century," in *The Empress Theophanu: Byzantium and the West at the Turn of the First Millennium*, ed. Adelbert Davids (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1–27, at 21. See also Althoff, *Otto III*, 40–51; and Rosamond McKitterick, "Ottonian Intellectual Culture in the Tenth Century and the Role of Theaphanu," in *The Empress Theophanu: Byzantium and the West at the Turn*

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the regency for Otto III until her death in 991. It was then taken up by Otto I's still-living second wife, the grandmother empress Adelaide. Her exercise of the imperial power and influence upon her grandson demonstrate the lasting impact of the apocalyptic ideas that were circulating among the Ottonians half a century earlier.

Historians are unsure when Queen Gerberga died. She fades from the records around 968 or 969, though she might have lived for another few decades.[106] But if she was responsible for infusing the much younger Empress Adelaide with apocalyptic enthusiasm, the latter in turn passed the same onto her grandson. This (to my mind, highly likely) possibility has unfortunately been neglected within historiography of the tenth century. Matthew Gabriele has written in detail on the uses imperial rulers like Otto III made of the Last World Emperor prophecy, the remembered legacy of Charlemagne, and the political importance of symbols—visual, literary, and prophetic.[107] He omits mention, however, of the women closest to Otto III and their potential influence on imperial propaganda and expression. For example, while Gabriele refers to Queen Gerberga as the recipient of Adso's letter on the Antichrist, Adso and his monastic community are looked to in order to understand its contents rather than the Ottonian queen and her networks of communication through which apocalyptic concerns were shared.[108] Gabriele is not unique in neglecting Gerberga in his otherwise laudable study. Most historians who write about Adso do little more than mention Gerberga as his addressee. Even Schulenburg, who devotes an essay to the role of women in early medieval apocalyptic thought, hardly goes beyond the bare minimum of information about the queen. When she discusses Empress Adelaide's apocalyptic interests, Adso is used as a narrative transition between the middle- and late-tenth century, but Gerberga herself is forgotten.[109] Likewise, James Palmer theorizes that Otto III's mother might have shared the Greek version of the Last World Emperor prophecy or that Heribert, archbishop of Cologne, might have told him of Adso's letter. Adelaide's direct connection to Gerberga, however, is not mentioned as a possible vector.[110] Levi Roach perhaps comes closest to acknowledging the importance of Ottonian women's relationships in Otto III's apocalyptic worldview, but he, too, fails to fully explore the connections. He points out that Gerberga was Otto III's great-aunt through his grandfather Otto I. Roach thinks this extended, indirect familial connection might best explain Otto III's exposure to the Last World Emperor legend. I agree that information might well have come through this avenue. But—frustratingly—he does not mention the fact that Gerberga was also the twice-over sister-in-law of his regent grandmother.[111] Indeed, the omission is made worse by the lack of reference to Adelaide anywhere in the same essay. This failure by historians to acknowledge the many connections between Gerberga and Adelaide—familial, political, psychological, and apocalyptic—must not be repeated in future work on tenth-century continental apocalyptic thought.

of the First Millennium, ed. Adelbert Davids (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 169–193, especially 183–189.

[106]See Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen*, 272.

[107]See Gabriele, *Empire of Memory*, 97–128.

[108]Ibid., 110.

[109]Schulenburg, "Early Medieval Women," 241–243.

[110]Palmer, *Apocalypse*, 202.

[111]Roach, "Emperor Otto III," 94.

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Nevertheless, Gabriele's discussion demonstrates the importance apocalyptic and universalizing language and symbols had among the later Ottonians, particularly when such could be turned to political ends by portraying the emperor as not only *a* but *the* Christian monarch, as when Otto III wore a robe embroidered with images drawn from John's Apocalypse when crowned in 996.[112] Otto, by the pen of Gerbert of Aurillac (ca. 946–1003), soon afterward wrote to his grandmother about being crowned emperor, hoping that it brought her joy.[113] It almost certainly did. Adelaide's apocalyptic enthusiasm would increase, right up until her death on December 16, 999—the start of the year she believed held prophetic significance within sight.[114]

While historians have wrestled over how to interpret the year 1000, Adelaide's interest in the date was a continuation of older apocalyptic concerns inherited through her husband's family and passed on to her grandson, the scion of both a western and eastern imperial house and perhaps best suited to fulfill the political apocalyptic prophecies written for her twice-over sister-in-law, Gerberga. Though he died young at the age of twenty-one in 1002, the apocalyptic symbols and language surrounding his short reign[115] would have found their way to his court in part through his grandmother. Indeed, it would have been hard to avoid thinking of them. For example, after Otto III invited Gerbert of Aurillac to court to tutor him in 997, Gerbert noted how the young man combined Greek birth (through his mother) with Roman imperial rule (through his father).[116] Certainly, this flattering assessment would hardly have been news for Otto. Nevertheless, these paired lineages of authority would have added to the subtle interest of anyone familiar with apocalyptic theory from either the East or the West.[117] Otto's reported desire to travel to Jerusalem to become a monk (that is, divesting himself of imperial authority) further echoes elements of the Last World Emperor legend.[118] Thus, Otto's interest in powerful symbols of imperial authority—such as those on his coronation clothes—outlived Adelaide. Gabriele interprets Otto's opening of Charlemagne's tomb at Aachen on Pentecost in 1000 to find him "in a state resembling suspended animation" as an indication that contemporaries expected the old emperor would fulfill the Last World Emperor prophecy, with past and future merging together as history approached its culmination. It was but one episode in a long history of mythologizing the first Roman Emperor the West had seen in 300 years—one that placed special importance on the Franks and their growing importance in prophetic history.[119] But regardless of Charlemagne's long and varied history as a literary and prophetic focal point, Otto III had received from his family the legacy that the Last World Emperor was indeed a certain reality, and his actions were to be of great impact on the whole of Christian society. Though the Ottonian dynasty ended in 1024 with the death of Henry II, the political prophecy its members developed

[112]Ibid., 78; Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 163; Gabriele, *Empire of Memory*, 105.

[113]Gerbert of Aurillac (Pope Sylvester II), *The Letters of Gerbert of Aurillac: With His Papal Privileges as Sylvester II*, trans. Harriet Pratt Lattin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 271. Gerbert became Pope Sylvester II in 999.

[114]Odilo of Cluny, *Vita Sanctae Adalheidis Imperatricis*, 361.

[115]Palmer, *Apocalypse*, 201–208.

[116]See Gerbert, *Letters*, 296–298.

[117]Palmer, *Apocalypse*, 201–202; Roach, "Emperor Otto III," 94.

[118]Roach, "Emperor Otto III," 98–99.

[119]Gabriele, *Empire of Memory*, 120–128.

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and shared (particularly among the women) would remain in European culture and continue to evolve as the years passed. Though the intellectual credit for the Last World Emperor prophecy in the West deservedly belongs to Adso of Montier-en-Der, it was his patroness, Queen Gerberga of Saxony, for whose sake the prophecy was written, who ensured it spread among the courts of Europe.

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