This article provides a critical response to R. I. Moore’s keynote paper for the millennial special issue of the *Journal of Religious History*. Moore dismisses any connection between the reports of popular heresies in the early eleventh century and millennial concerns, either chronological or prophetic, and argues that the documents tell us almost nothing reliable about popular religiosity at this time. This response suggests that there are many good reasons for interpreting the evidence from a millennial perspective. The religious activity of the period (religio cults, pilgrimage, peace assemblies, penitential processions, apostolic movements, “heresy” and its persecution, anti-Jewish violence) should be viewed as part of a larger interrelated whole, rather than as discrete, unrelated phenomena. The article then focuses on Rodulfus Glaber’s famous treatment of the peasant heretic Leutard in 1000 as a case study in such an approach. It reads Glaber not as a confused and incomprehensible historian, but a subtle and complex one who believed that the chronological millennium of 1000 marked an apocalyptic turning point, and whose narratives were crafted to convey as much about this transformation as possible.

It is with some regret that I write the following. I normally like a good argument, and there is nothing I like better than to argue about the year 1000, even when the counter-arguments are silly, ill informed, and misconceived.

1. My favourite is G. L. Burr’s comment that people back then didn’t know about Arabic numerals, so the magic of the shift from 999 to 1000 would have escaped them. Argument repeated as convincing by J. Barzun and H. Graff (*The Modern Researcher* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1977], 99–100) as if the shift from DCCCCLXXXVIII to M paled beside the “round number” effect of Arabic numerals. For a detailed case extensively annotated of an apocalyptic year 1000, see R. Landes, “The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern,” *Speculum* 75 (2000), forthcoming.

2. It is difficult to speak of “anti-terrors” scholarship, since its primary purpose is to “close the books” on the discussion. See Landes, “Fear of an Apocalyptic Year,” n. 182. Sweeping remarks about “no texts,” “not a trace” of millennial concern around 1000 populate this literature. “En effet, ni Sigebert de Gembloux (1119), ni . . . [he lists six other historians] n’ont fait mention de ces terreur superstiteuses de la fin du Xe siècle” (Pitane, “Les Prétendues terreur de l’an Mille,” *Revue des Questions historiques* 13 [1873]: 147); bold statements often directly contradicted by the historical works they cite (e.g., Sigebert of Gembloux, *Chronicon universale* c. 1114; PL 160.198; *MGH SS* 6.353–4 ad an. 979 and 1000).

3. The assumption of a caricature of millennialism in which fear and relief represent the uniquely identifiable traits is characteristic of anti-terrors argumentation. I know of no “anti-terrors” historian who knows the anthropological and sociological literature on the social dimensions of millennialism.

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But when my opponent is someone whose work I admire immensely and whose conversation I have prized for decades, whose book on the Origins of European Dissent, which taught me how to approach ecclesiastical texts about heresy, was the most exciting historiographical discovery of graduate school (the Peace of God and Rodulfus Glaber being the most exciting historical discoveries), then I confess I lose some of my taste for battle. But it is clear to me that I must address the kind of “forensically devastating” argumentation that I find both here and in Barthélemy. Alas. How much more interesting a conversation might we have were the page not littered with comments like “nothing that has been said in the last twenty years weakens in any way the well established conclusion that such claims merely reflect . . .” or “evidence that heresy was in fact being propagated among and accepted by ‘the populace’ remains zero . . .”.

These kinds of dismissive remarks lead me to make the following challenge: Until some historian can better explain why the Latin church went through three different chronologies in its first millennium, each adopted when its “end of the millennium” was three to four centuries away, and the first two abandoned when they had reached their final century, then I must insist that my explanation stands and should be the operating assumption in dealing with popular religion at the turn of a millennial year, be that year AD 1000, or 6000 Annu Mundi. Thus, in order for Moore to state that I have not “convincingly demonstrated” any role for the advent of the calendrical millennium in the minds of people who lived through it, he needs to explain the extraordinarily consistent pattern of data that I have laid out over the first millennium of Christian history. And until he does, I do not think he has the right to dismiss something like popular heresy around 1000 as having “nothing to do with the approach of the millennium in either the calendrical or the prophetic sense.”

I have not the space here to devote to a discussion of millennial traditions in Latin Christianity of the first Christian millennium. I refer the reader, and anyone wishing to understand what the advent of the millennium might mean to commoners in these centuries, to my work on the subject. Allow me just to point out some of my conclusions in terms of the kinds of millennial beliefs and apocalyptic behaviour that we could expect to see emerge at the time, and which the documentation — especially that on “popular” heresy —

corroborates in remarkable detail. Above all, the thesis argues that there is a continuous tradition of popular millennial expectation in which one of Christianity’s central tenets was the promise of a millennial kingdom of fellowship, peace, and abundance. In expressing these aspirations, millennialism took both apocalyptic forms (i.e., imminent expectations), or anti- or non-apocalyptic forms (i.e., expectation postponed to a later time).

We can identify both these currents from the earliest years of Christianity, and document their survival, especially in the West, for the next thousand years (at least). On the one hand, we have the apocalyptic charismatics — the prophets and messiahs that Cohn studies — and on the other, the clerical conservatives who try to counter the dangerous excesses of apocalyptic expectation with the promise of the millennial kingdom at the end of the current chronological millennium. This latter tradition is of course much better documented than that of the apocalyptic prophets who neither tend to write nor to find favour among the record keepers. The traces left by clerics opposed to the charismatics are thus best understood as the tips of an iceberg of popular religiosity and oral discourse that lie beneath the written page, beyond the margins of texts. Without a sense of the power of millennial beliefs to galvanize populations we understand neither the behaviour of the elites nor of the commoners. Both populations are capable of producing millennial enthusiasts, but it is when the populace waxes enthusiastic for apocalyptic rhetoric that matters become dangerous.

To the millennial scholar, the link between millennial expectations and popular heresy is almost self-evident. No notion can be more subversive than millennialism, and no time more appropriate for its appearance than an apocalyptic season when people think that the final transformation is about to happen. Under such circumstances people lose all fear of future consequences, and their “hidden transcripts” surface. Millennialism offers people who hate their current condition — be it high or low, but more often low — hope, hope that not only will their condition be wondrously transformed, but those evil people, driven by their libido dominandi as Augustine would call it, who now so wretchedly abuse their power to unjustly seize what is not rightfully theirs, will be suitably punished.

Thus, when scholars come upon a period where a wide range of unusually active popular religiosity, some of it distinctly subversive, makes it into a documentation that usually ignores these people entirely, they should at least be open to the possibility that they are witnessing the workings of popular millennialism. And when the major historians and theologians of the period itself directly associate the appearance of heresy with both apocalyptic themes and with millennial chronology, then it seems fairly obvious that one should at least “run through” the events in question from a millennial optic, rather than dismissing it a priori with what amounts not so much to argument as rhetoric. So let me proceed by first critiquing Moore’s approach, and then provide an alternative “reading” of the most striking “heretic” of the millennium, Glaber’s Leutardus.
Moore’s approach essentially argues that the unusual appearance of mentions of popular heresy in the documentation of the early eleventh century indicates not the existence of popular heresy, but of accusations among rival factions within the elite. This approach, first suggested by Bautier in his analysis of the court factions at work in the burning of the heretics at Orléans in 1022, and then given a more literary touch by Lobrichon in his handling of a newly discovered text on a Perigordian heresy, Moore now applies across the board. The drawbacks of such argumentation strike me as manifold.

Above all, this misreads Lobrichon, who never implies that the letter has no relationship to the exceptional realities of popular religiosity at the time. In Lobrichon’s presentation, the rhetoric of deflected accusation (what he calls a “photographic negative” [94]) only makes sense as a redirection of accusations that already circulate about real popular heresies. Indeed, Lobrichon does a masterful job of embedding the rise of this kind of heresy firmly within the spiritual and social dynamics of an apocalyptic world swept up in the consequent eschatology of the Peace of God movement.

To take Lobrichon as suggesting that Heribert’s text meant there were not popular heresies connected to the Peace and to apocalyptic currents, that it was merely invented to attack the lay lords and bishops who opposed the radical reform program of Cluny and the Peace, is a misreading of the argument. Lobrichon’s Heribert is certainly not engaged in “nothing more than a rhetorical flourish,” but in a complex and deeply embedded social discourse.

Moreover, this approach cannot explain why, after over five centuries of not using this kind of argument, all of a sudden, at the beginning of the eleventh century, with no relationship to any actual heresy, we find this form of rhetoric repeated in a wide variety of clerical milieux. Neither Lobrichon’s suggestion, nor Moore’s more blanket assertions, can explain why these elites would chose to make a new kind of heretical accusation, especially if that description had no relationship to an external reality. On the contrary, if these writers were so “soaked in the writings of St Paul and the Fathers,” then why did they not just accuse their enemies of elite heresies drawn from these sources? Why make up a new heresy — “nova haeresis orta est in mundo” — a “heresy” which lays the legitimate and (for a cleric) the deeply threatening and quite novel claim that layfolk can pursue the apostolic life, indeed that their pursuit of it is more Christian that that of the clergy. Neither Moore nor Lobrichon (and certainly not Barthélemy) has explained why an accusation of “popular heresy” should be preferable in even one case.

Given how tenuous and complex an argument Lobrichon made, there is no justification for a heavy-handed mass application of the model of “rhetorical attack” to all the cases. Most egregiously here we have Moore’s offhanded and completely undocumented suggestion that the “Lobrichon” approach could probably be applied to the Leutard case (see below). The historians who do use this approach make no effort to actually embed this supposed “rhetoric” in actual documented rivalries. Were they correct, then they should be able to shed extremely valuable light on the detailed relations between reforming and conservative elites available in other documentation. This would be a contribution. Instead, the argument merely serves to shut the lights out on a rare view of popular religious culture.

In so doing — and here I think the analysis is at its weakest — it creates a barrier between these “alleged” strains of popular — “heretical” — religiosity and all the other ones that the period literally teems with — peace assemblies, pilgrimages, relic cults, majestates, penitential processions, etc. This is certainly not what Lobrichon has done with Heribert’s letter. As Moore and Talal Asad have both pointed out, “heresy” is the product of a perceived threat, and that it often represents that extreme of a larger religious phenomenon which the church wishes to cut off in order to assimilate as much of the rest as possible. Just because our ecclesiastical sources want to separate out the wheat from the tares and burn the tares hardly means that we historians have to follow their lead.

Above all, what I find so distressing about Moore’s analysis is that he, like Barthélemy, seems to know so little of millennialism. Indeed, it is not at all clear what he imagines it might be, when he so categorically dismisses it as a factor in the events of the period. “The drive for the repossession of secularized church land, or what was alleged to be such, gathered increasing momentum in the closing decades of the tenth century and was a central objective of the Peace of God, but it had nothing to do with the approach of the millennium in either the calendrical or the prophetic sense.” The sentence is profoundly misleading: This drive for repossession is one element of the ecclesiastical objectives of the Peace movement. To focus on it as a central objective of the whole peace movement — that is, including the commoner participants’ goals — and then reject out of hand millennial factors which the author seems to think refer uniquely to the eccentric activity of messianic pretenders, prepares

8. There is a striking difference between Lobrichon’s dense reading of Heribert’s heretics as a discourse on popular heresy, apocalypticism, and the radical tendencies of the Peace movement on the one hand, and the remarkably brief and vague allusions to the “real” targets of the letter, the banal seigneurie, lay and clerical, on the other. In all Lobrichon spends only a few sentences on the latter (“Chiaroscuro,” 97, 102).

9. Lobrichon moves more in the direction of Moore’s approach in his piece on the synod of Arras, but falls into the same problems that Moore does — he cannot explain why Gerard would choose to attack a proto-reforming impulse of “separating of sacred and profane” (84) by accusing “supposed” peasants of a religiosity that embodies the integration of sacred and profane — the apostolic community of work and communion with God — and rejects precisely the ecclesiastical elements that the later reformers were trying to save.

the reader to have popular religiosity discussed without any consideration of their apocalyptic hopes and fears, nor of the varieties of the millennial experience. Thus we are told that the Peace mobilized the “pressure of public opinion” and “skillfully orchestrated embarrassment [to] redress [what] lawful authority could no longer provide.”

What we are not told is where the popular enthusiasm came from that permitted the ecclesiastics to deploy it to their ends. Why such enthusiasm was deemed sufficiently strong that it was deployed in the place of “lawful authority” (i.e., force). And why these ecclesiastical ends sometimes produced hostility among the populace.

Moore does make an unsupported and highly debatable allusion to “much older roots” for this kind of ecclesiastical “manipulation” as an explanation of where it might have come from. But this can hardly explain the sudden, extraordinary, and unprecedented peace assemblies of the two decades before the millennium of the Incarnation (990s) and that of the Passion (1020s and early ’30s), or the sudden decision to execute heretics. 

11. Similarly, Barthélemy quotes Karl F. Werner approvingly as characterizing the first clear-cut Peace council at Charroux as “purement Carolingien” (“La paix de Dieu dans son contexte (989–1041),” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* [1997], 17), when there is no record of a Carolingian assembly held in open fields with large gatherings of relics and attendant crowds such as occurred at Charroux.

This is the kind of passage that one can take either way. The plain meaning of the text suggests that between the execution of heretics in 1022 in Orléans by the king and the mid-1040s, the “elimination” of heresy became a widespread activity, that there were summary executions based merely on the suggestion that the person in question was fasting (a practice that should be limited to the professional religious, the oratores). In this reading, the violence apparently targets the commoner population (only with great difficulty does one give this kind of summary justice to aristocrats), and suggests an ad hoc alliance between the clergy and the warrior class in the repression of popular forms of autonomous religious organization. Such violent coalitions in defence of aristocratic privilege were hardly new or unthinkable. The Frankish aristocracy had slaughtered the vulgus promiscuum of the region between Seine and Loire in 859 for no other reason than that they defended themselves against the Norse invaders; and the clerics referred to the massacring lords as potentiores nostri. Such a case, of course, is merely political; but then, as any good millenial scholar knows, millennial religiosity is, by definition, political. Why would people capable of handling political protest in such fashion not handle religious political protest in a similar fashion — especially when given the green light by their ecclesiastical colleagues?

Or one can take this comment as a mere rhetorical exaggeration designed to bolster the good bishop’s reputation and take a swipe at the French. No actual violence to speak of here, no actual open warfare between elites using summary inquisitorial justice to repress a wave of aggressive egalitarian Christianity among commoners. As Moore puts it: this text — and similar ones — do not “necessarily amount to more than a rhetorical flourish.” But he then adds that if it did reflect “repression of popular enthusiasm . . . it would not be very surprising or very difficult to explain — without reference to the millennium.” I would have thought that, if anti-heresy “rhetoric” spilled over into the violent repression of popular religious currents, that would be surprising indeed, especially since this would constitute a radical departure from earlier forms of religious suppression and foreshadow the internal crusades of the thirteenth century. Moreover, it turns out, the issues involved here contain a double millennial component.

But before looking at that millennial component, let us examine what documentation from the period supports Anselm’s comment. In the case of Ademar of Chabannes, a number of passages directly and indirectly corroborate

15. Berlin Staatsbibliothek, Phillips 1664, fol. 75; see the discussion in Landes, Relics, 39, esp. n. 91.
the explicit evidence: "And from the secular judges of Christian dignity not a few [accused heretics] when submitted to torture, preferred to choose execution to the salvation of conversion." Such material works poorly in the Moore exegesis of rhetorical attacks since much of it is what sociologists call non-reactive evidence: the specific data on heresy is not the “purpose” of the text.

Second, whatever date a document may give for the appearance of the heresy, all the documents on heresy — with the exception of the Poitiers charter of 1016 and possibly the Heribert letter (dated by the hand) — are written after 1022. In other words, the execution at Orléans was a watershed moment: it not only permitted authors from a wide range of places to speak openly about a phenomenon that clearly existed beforehand, but gave them the language and tone to use. Was such a watershed merely limited to verbal abuse? Or was it a signal to the entire kingdom on the proper way to deal with heretics? And finally, there is a remarkably close parallel in both textual characteristics and sociopolitical dynamics, between this reported violence against heretics and the equally novel and extraordinary violence against Jews in precisely this same millennial generation.

These unprecedented developments, with so long-term a future life, should astonish the historian trying to understand the birth of a persecuting society, and elicit serious explanations. Among the explanations, I think the millennial dimension deserves particular attention because it offers insights into both the origins of the popular heresy and the nature of the ecclesiastical reaction. First, as I already mentioned, millennial movements strongly emphasize not doctrinal issues but social ones — justice, an end to oppression, the punishment of evil-doers, the illegitimacy of the current political and ecclesiastical system. Understandably authoritarian regimes regularly use force, often massive force, against them. Jesus was crucified, John the Baptist was beheaded, the False Christ of Bourges was assassinated, the Anabaptists of Europe were executed by Catholics and Protestants alike, the men, women, and children of Canudos and Wounded Knee were massacred, all for all the same reasons. Their religiosity radically subverted the very legitimacy of power as it was currently exercised.

But the issue is not only millennial just because the heretics might well be millennialists, it is so also because the clergy was apocalyptic, that is their very violence reflected, theologically, a position that claimed that the End was imminent, that they were now engaged in the final battle. Not only do I think that the level of alarm and the abreaction of the clergy in this period reached unprecedented levels and led to exceptional behaviour, but I think the apocalyptic explanation is the best way to understand how long-standing official policies which served to restrain apocalyptic violence might have been, even momentarily, overridden.

III

Let us turn to an actual text about heresy and see what kind of apocalyptic and millennial material it yields. I choose the best example for my case,
one that Moore mentions in passing a couple of times, that of Leutard of Châlons-sur-Marne.

It occurred around the end of the millennial year that a commoner (*homo plebeius*) in Gaul in the village of Vertus in the county of Châlons appeared. As events proved in the end, it is probable that he was an envoy of Satan. This is how his most vicious insanity began. One day when he was working alone in the field, he fell asleep and dreamt that a great swarm of bees entered his secret parts. They came out his mouth and stung him all over many times, but eventually spoke, ordering him to do things impossible for humans. Exhausted, he arose, went home and dismissed his wife in divorce as if following the evangelical precept. He went out as if to pray but, entering into a church and ripping down a crucifix, he broke it. Whoever saw him was struck with fear, believing him to be what he was, insane. But he managed to persuade them, as rustics have inconstant minds, that he did all this from a wondrous revelation from God.

He poured forth a great many useless and empty sermons and, desiring to be a teacher, he led people away from the master of doctrine. For he claimed that tithes were unnecessary and senseless. And just as with the other heresies, the more craftily to deceive, he claimed that the Scriptures were divine although he opposed them, and similarly he claimed that though the prophets said many good things, they were also mistaken in some matters. His fame, as if that of one of a religious person of sound mind, rapidly won him a not inconsiderable following among the commoners (*partem non modicam vulgi*).

When the aged bishop of the diocese, Gebuin, heard of this, he ordered Leutard brought before him. When Gebuin questioned him about all that he was reported to have said or done, Leutard began to hide the poison of his vileness, wishing that he had not learnt to take texts from Holy Scripture for his purposes. But the able bishop saw that his teachings were not only incorrect but filled with great and damnable error, and so he revealed to all how Leutard’s madness had led to heresy. In this way he rescued many of those who had been deceived, and restored them more firmly than ever to the Catholic faith. As for Leutard, when he saw that he was defeated and deprived of the support of the commoners, he committed suicide by throwing himself in a well. 16

Moore would have us read this à la Lobrichon: “an attempt to conceal another division within the elite by shrugging off as the work of a madman a defeated but perhaps dangerous attempt at ‘reform’ — that is, redistribution of cathedral lands — in the diocese of Châlons-sur-Marne.” Moore apparently feels no need to support this reading with any reference to just such a property dispute, and yet the reading itself shrugs off the text, essentially telling us its details are worthless as indicators of a popular reality that Moore offers us no insight into.

Let us, rather, examine the text more closely.

Nothing in this text contradicts a reading of Leutard as an apocalyptic prophet announcing either the Endtime (like Thiota), or the dawning of the new millennium (like the “false Christ” of Bourges). Granted Glaber does not tell us this, but then he tells us virtually nothing about the voluminous quantity of Leutard’s teachings in any case, so to claim no millennialism is an argument *ex silentio*. On the contrary, there are several clues, explicit and

implicit, that Leutard is precisely the topos of a charismatic messianic figure. First, Glaber notes at the beginning of the story that Leutard arose “circa finem millesimi anni,” hence this is, at least in Glaber’s mind if not Moore’s, related to calendrical millennialism. If one follows the millennial chronology, the end of 1000 would mark precisely that moment where, disappointed by the failure of ecclesiastical promises for that year, people, as Augustine had warned, “would lose faith.” The significance of Leutard (and the whole “apostolic” tradition of the High Middle Ages) is that the faith lost in post-apocalyptic times was not faith in Christianity, but in ecclesiastical Christianity. What better soil for millennialism? Why wouldn’t Leutard preach a millennial message — because he was loyal to Augustine?

Second, Glaber has modelled Leutard explicitly on Gregory’s “false Christ”: an agricultural labourer driven to his religious madness by insects, who becomes a mad messiah. But whereas flies drove Gregory’s Christ mad, bees drove Leutard. The difference is perhaps significant: flies are unquestionably from the devil; bees are symbols of good, and more to the point, in Gregory the Great’s teachings, compunction, that which drives the soul to repent, feels like bee stings. What Glaber has given us is a striking image of the kinds of traumatic experiences that many messiahs experience (e.g., Handsome Lake, the Seneca Indian in 1799, or Hong Xiuquan, the Chinese messiah of the Taiping).18

Moore seems to feel that Leutard is not sufficiently bizarre to be a millennial figure: he doesn’t marry a Mary (live or in statue), he does not distribute bathwater and nail clippings as relics, he does not claim to be Christ. But such reasoning restricts millennial activity and charismatic figures with a millennial message to only the most “eccentric” cases. Understandably, Cohn did this at a time when millennial studies was in its infancy. But we now know much more about millennialism than Cohn did, in part thanks to his pioneering work. It may be just the kinds of restraint that Leutard shows, perhaps directly related to his iconoclasm (Tanchelm travels with a statue of his consort Mary), that makes him a forerunner of the immensely creative and powerful apostolic, that is, egalitarian currents of the High Middle Ages.

The only part of the tale that does not “fit” the millennial model is the ending. Millennial prophets with followings rarely fall apart under questioning. It is possible that, his prophecy failed, Leutard, like Thiota, was humiliated. But more often, apocalyptic prophets manage to redate, reformulate, and retain the loyalty of their following. Both Ademar and Wazo of Liège comment that once won to their heresy, people were lost forever to the church. Moreover, Leutard is only the first mention of popular heresy in the diocese of Châlons,

17. See Gregory of Tours, Historiae, 10.25. Gregory’s account of the False Christ served as the locus classicus of this type of figure. In the early twelfth century, just at the time that Tanchelm had taken up his messianic ministry, Lambert of Saint-Omer included precisely this excerpt from Gregory’s work in his Liber floridus, in a section on wonders and signs (Ghent University Library, MS 92, fol. 210v).

a presence that lasts generations, even centuries.19 Indeed Wazo’s letter of the mid-1040s responds to an inquiry from the bishop of Châlons about how to handle the problem. It would seem, then, that if any aspect of Glaber’s account is the product of “mere rhetoric” it would be the description of Leutard’s ignominious end.

In Leutard we find an extraordinary tale: here is an account of a locally generated, almost spontaneous popular heresy arising from the commoner class. If Glaber had wanted to, he could have attributed it, as Ademar did with the popular heresy he and his clerical colleagues had to deal with in Aquitaine, to outside agitators. On the contrary, he goes out of his way to identify the problem as one of local commoner religious activity arising specifically “towards the end of the millesimal year.” And yet, this is not even the most exceptional part of the passage. There is an even more surprising, indeed shocking part of this account, that comes at his conclusion to both this tale of heresy and to the second book of his Histories, the one that concludes at the year 1000.

Many, throughout Italy at this time were found to be tainted with this perverse doctrine [allusion to another, elite, heresy attributed to Vilgard of Ravenna], and they too perished, by the sword or by fire. At this very same time more emerged from Sardinia, an island that generally abounds in heresy. They managed to corrupt some of the people of Spain, but they too were exterminated by the orthodox. All these signs accord with John’s prophecy (Rev 20:7) that, after a thousand years were completed Satan would be unleashed, about which we shall treat at greater length in the third book.

This is a curious passage which historians, having puzzled about it bootlessly, tend to dismiss as useless. The material on Vilgard, attested to nowhere else, seems to date to the episcopacy of Peter VI (927–71) which is over half a century past. The nature of the heresy — the worship of the classics — seems unlikely to have spread to Italy, much less Sardinia and Spain, and hardly seems worthy of extermination by fire and sword. And the reference to Revelation seems completely out of place and, since Glaber doesn’t, as he had promised he would, take up the point in book three, it seems inconsequential. These final remarks are thus deemed “so vague as to be meaningless.”20

Let us try a more careful approach. Above all, let us note that this is the single most defiant and exceptional passage in Latin historiography since the time of Augustine and his disciple Orosius. Augustine had explicitly banned the interpretation of current events in terms of apocalyptic prophecy of any kind, and especially those drawn from the book of Revelation.21 Not only has Glaber openly invoked the most dangerous book of the Bible, but gone straight to the most dangerous passage in the book, the textual fountainhead of all millennial beliefs, the passage Augustine had worked so hard to domesticate. No single text expresses more starkly the millennial fascination — calendrical

21. This is, at one level, Augustine’s most powerful contribution to Latin theology. It stands at the pinnacle of the *City of God* (Books 18–22, especially 20).
and apocalyptic — with the date of 1000. It is a perfect expression of what I have called **augustinisme chronologique**, or the mistaken use of Augustine to argue that, since the millennium began at the time of Jesus, the advent of the year 1000 (or, better yet, 1033) would mark the end of the millennial scenario depicted in Revelation, not the millennial kingdom, but the brief dominion of Antichrist and the Last Judgment. Both modern schools — the “apocalyptic Year 1000” historians and the “anti-terrors” ones — understood how significant this text is. With such a passage, one can hardly say “Peruse the texts, the chronicles, the histories of the time and you will find no trace of interest in the year 1000.” So some historians have dismissed Glaber — a gossip, a gyrovague, a psychopath — while others (including the great Ferdinand Lot) have inexplicably denied that the passage even exists. It does exist; it is pure Glaber. And it is very meaningful.

The passage which culminates in this extraordinary act of historiographical temerity does not, then, offer us something so vague that it is meaningless, but rather something carefully constructed to convey as much meaning as possible under conditions of great restraint. It is Glaber’s statement on the “hersies of the millennium.” It needs to be understood that Glaber tells us this tale not because it was an isolated incident, but because it formed part of the “wondrous events that occurred in, around, and during the millennial year since the Incarnation.”

The differences that Moore notes between Leutard and other “millenarian prophets” of the Cohn type may well indicate a critical shift in the direction of millennial activity in the West, one more “pragmatic” and enduring. Here I think Brian Stock’s seminal notion of **textual communities** becomes a valuable analytic tool. These are communities that are bound together by a reading of the biblical texts, by the adoption of an egalitarian law, by a discipline designed to prepare them for the coming Day of the Lord. The wide-ranging presence of these “apostolic” heresies according to the sources (from Languedoc and Aquitaine to the Lotharingian border) suggests a movement, however acephalous. Certainly our clerical sources express precisely this kind of concern, whether it is Heribert writing to all the churches of the world about the heretics of Perigord, or John of Ripoll writing to his bishop telling him to beware the presence of the “type” of heretics that were burned at Orléans and search for them everywhere in his bishopric. Glaber, who was

22. Above, n.2.
a master of the paradigmatic anecdote,\(^{27}\) tells us of Leutard not as a single isolated incident (as most historians take it),\(^{28}\) but as an example of a wider phenomenon which had many permutations, some heretical, some, depending on both the charismatic and the local church, still within the bounds of a significantly more capacious ecclesia.

This reading, as far-fetched as it might strike the modern reader, has two great advantages. First, it takes Glaber seriously, rather than dismissing him as a gossipy fool, prattling on meaninglessly. Second, it explains why he then steps into his most dramatic sentence: “All these signs accord with the prophecy of John, who said that Satan would be released once the thousand years had been completed, which we shall treat at greater length in the third book.” For Glaber, what happened at the turn of the millennium was nothing less than the engagement of the final battle, the beginning of apocalyptic time. This seems to make no sense to modern historians who, like Moore, note that, writing in the mid-’20s, such a perception had to have been falsified for quite some time. Indeed, one might date apocalyptic disappointment to, at latest, from 1003/4 onwards.\(^{29}\)

But students of millennialism know that, once in apocalyptic time, believers engage in a wide variety of improvisations in order to sustain their apocalyptic beliefs, a kind of apocalyptic jazz. No matter what happens, as long as events continue to have colossal proportions — as they certainly did in the decades after 1000 — such believers can sustain their “reading” of endtimes. And, of course, as Glaber tells us at the beginning of Book IV, written in the later 1030s, in the aftermath of 1000, many people re-dated to 1033, thus creating a “millennial generation” in which people lived in a near constant state of apocalyptic excitation.\(^{30}\) Thus, by looking at Glaber’s text from the perspective of a well-attested millennial tradition and reading Glaber’s remarks carefully, as the work of a thoughtful historian, rather than taking him as a confused rhetorical hack whose interests, when they are not unintelligible, lie in using depictions of heresies to attack the political enemies of his reform movement, we find a complex and comprehensive vision of his generation — the millennial generation. And at the core lies the appearance of millennial heresies, on the one hand, and his millennial understanding of those heresies on the other.

IV

Let me conclude with a formulation of how I see the role of popular heresy in this period, since it seems to my colleagues so easy to dismiss a caricature of the apocalyptic thesis. First, the Peace of God movement needs to be viewed

27. See his masterful account of the wave of peace councils of 1033 (\textit{Quinque libri historiarum}, 4.4–7).
28. Such a reading lies behind Moore’s old conclusion, with which he apparently remains satisfied, that the heresies of the early eleventh century were relatively isolated.
29. Antichrist rules for 3.5 years, hence 1003/4 represents the outermost limits.
not merely from the perspective of the ecclesiastical sponsors and the middling aristocracy which gained seigneurial legitimation as a result, and certainly not merely from the view of those whose primary concern was their property and their privileges. Certainly such concerns were present, and certainly they were more likely to find their way into the texts that reach us — including the oaths — than other, more subversive factors and players. But equally clearly, we must attend to the mentality of the commoners who attended the Peace assemblies, who danced and sang to Psalm 150 — “Praise the Lord with timbrel and drum . . . Let every living creature praise the Lord” — to greet a healing miracle; whose collective enthusiasm and miracle-engendering presence contributed so much to the social power of these assemblies and to their ecclesiastical sponsors. For them, however mistaken they might have been, I submit that these gatherings were the very essence of the advent of the millennial kingdom. They followed their “resurrected” saints, often in “majesties” (statues containing the relics) in large throngs to gather in open fields, where the warrior class, appropriately chastened by the fear of both the Lord and his saints, promised to rein in their violence.31 “It was as if to see the children of Israel, having left the slavery of Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, wishing to enter the Promised Land.”32 The Peace of God . . . the reign of the saints . . . the millennial kingdom.

Indeed, Glaber tells us that, at the millennial height of the movement, in 1033, the people assembled believed they were making a covenant with God and fellow man, and that as long as that covenant held — for four years according to him — the world was a place of abundance and peace, like the Jubilee years of biblical times.33 We may doubt his wisdom, and list the wars — “private” wars — that occurred from 1033 to 1037. But that neither means that in the extensive areas about which we do not have documentation in this period, the Peace was not effective,34 nor that Glaber has not given us vital information on the perceptions of that thoroughly under-documented class of people, the commoners. Given that we have virtually no texts that tell us what commoners thought, we should treat this with a great deal of care. And almost surely there were, as there are in every generation of Christians, enthused monks and clerics — people who sincerely believed in the promise of the messianic millennium at the end of the current chronological millennium — who encouraged these expressions of salvific enthusiasm. As for the bishops and abbots, for the record, they would insist that this was not the millennium, that one cannot know when the End would come, and that these councils

34. The indirect evidence suggests a notable increase in the productivity and the wealth of French society in the eleventh century, and direct evidence from places like the Amienois, suggests that following their Peace assembly of 1033 the yearly renewal of the meeting began to take on the tenor of a fair and carnival. See David Van Meter, “The Peace of Amiens-Corbie and Gerard of Cambrai’s Oration on the Three Functional Orders: The Date, the Context, the Rhetoric,” Revue belge de Philologie et d’Histoire 74 (1996): 646–55.
were not new but had a long and venerable tradition that dated back to the Carolingians at least. Off the record, however, even if they were not tempted to see this as the millennium, they had every reason to encourage such beliefs in their faithful since it was precisely the enthusiasm of the crowds that made the Peace councils work.

Essentially my argument about the Peace of God is that, for the first time in the history of Latin Christianity, popular millennialism expressed itself in a manner that joined rather than separated the elites and the commoners. This is perhaps the reason why it was not noticed by Norman Cohn, who, in looking for his subversive eccentrics, missed a different stream of Christian millennialism. This stream believes that the millennium comes in as the result of mankind’s efforts inspired by God, rather than by the mythical intervention of a superhuman returning Jesus (Rev. 19:11–21). In this version, Jesus comes back after, at the end of the earthly millennium, not to inaugurate it. Hence modern Protestant theologians call it post-millennialism, and more generically we might call it the activist, or transformed, millennialism.

This brand of millennialism tends towards acephalous (literally “headless,” i.e. non-messianic) manifestations, as expressed in the classic millennial hymn that Ademar cites in his most exalted passage on the Peace, from Isaiah and Micah: “and each man shall sit under his own fig and vine undisturbed” (Mic. 4:1–4, cf. Isa. 2:1–3). It eschews icons, which often accompany a hierarchical and authoritarian turn in the course of the millennial movement — with the messiah becoming a royal and divine figure. The first time we can document this stream thoroughly is at the turn of 1200, with Joachim’s inspiration of Francis and his followers, and the extraordinarily apocalyptic thirteenth century. But the Peace movement of the millennium is, I think I can say without fear of contradiction, the first even remotely documented case of such a vast movement, of a mass peace movement. For a period of about forty years, with two full and separate decades of waxing strength (990s, 1024–33), this movement dominated the discourse and actions of people from every walk of life including the aristocracy, involving them in a collective effort to transform society into a just and peaceful world.

Duby has a real insight in seeing these councils as cases of a social contract in the making. Using Glaber’s great hint, we can even specify where this contract came from. It was a covenant, an oral, collective commitment to live up to certain standards and responsibilities. These were not new ideas; but there are few times in history that the aristocracy even briefly accepted ideals; and, to follow Glaber and the evidence of our military sources, this aristocracy quickly fell prey to the blandishments of privilege. But let us not forget, these are the days of a brutal aristocracy, who turned their weapons on commoners at the slightest hint of autonomy. The peace movement brought huge crowds of people together for days at a time, in an atmosphere which empowered the commoners (miracles and enthusiasm) and discussed political

issues, and got the potentes to agree to concessions in their use of force. It called on the aristocracy to take oaths before the people and, what is still more remarkable, it had the essential and often enthusiastic support of members of the highest elite — bishops, abbots, counts, dukes, even King Robert. This was the first time I know of in history when this kind of mass, enthusiastic social reform received so favourable and sustained an interest and support from the aristocracy. It set in motion the dynamic of modernity, with its egalitarian principles, its civic culture culture of substituting speech for weaponry, its open culture of prize free speech, its social engine of initiatives from below that meet the approval of the elites, and initiatives from above that attract commoners. This of course was not all the peace was, nor all the peace produced. It also, as Moore and others have so ably argued, produced the banal seigneurie and the crusades.

The peace thus, even if for only a brief moment of years, but twice in four decades, transformed what had been a site of social contest — the prime divider between elites and commoners — into one that became a site of social cooperation. In the formula “social peace, freedom, and abundance” so eloquently articulated by Glaber about 1033 and seconded in his own clumsy way by Ademar, we find the nurseries of the communes, rural and urban, the essarts, the new towns and markets, the papal reform and legal revolution, the universities, the mass pilgrimages. And in the authoritarian and paranoid abreactions of an apocalyptically insecure leadership (new or old), threatened by the advance of a culture that clipped their wings, we find the hysterical anti-semitism, the crusading rages, the inquisitorial nightmare. Once we understand the radical nature of the Peace, and the commoner’s extraordinary perception of it, we can better understand where heresy comes from. The sour mood that Moore evokes at a number of points dates back at least to 1010, when even the reforming monks were drawn into a seizure of apocalyptic scapegoating and attack on the Jews. I would date it to sometime in the middle of the first decade of the millennium, when we have no evidence

for peace councils, when the crowds have been sent home, when famines had returned and signs in the heavens boded ill. Glaber dates it to the end of the year 1000. In this decade, the elite–commoner alliance first broke down, and the commoners who had, literally, converted to Christianity as a result of the Peace councils and the millennial wave, found themselves abandoned. Enter Leutard and apostolic heresy. When the second peace wave came, it came in counter-distinction to the build-up of reactionary violence (anti-Jewish, anti-heretic), and peaked in 1033. In the aftermath, the same disappointment followed, most notably in Bourges in 1038, when once again the warrior aristocracy slaughtered commoners, again with the approval of the clerical elites.42

While it held, for its exceptional runs of several years at a time, the Peace brought together a vast, immensely energetic assembly of all kinds of social, cultural, and religious currents — high aristocracy (counts, dukes), middling aristocracy (castellans), lower aristocracy (mounted warriors, “knights”), commoners both urban and rural, men and women, children, apostolic, apocalyptic, millennial, conservative, Augustinian, monastic, clerical, secular believers. Maybe even Jews. It had an impact through “word of mouth,” far beyond the areas that specifically had the assemblies, particularly through the pilgrims it set in motion in every direction to the end of the world (Santiago da Finisterra) and to its navel (Jerusalem).

But these were, like all millennial enthusiasms, short-lived and unstable alliances, not capable of bearing the weight of hope and expectation that inspired people tend to place on them. It is precisely the extravagance of this hope that constitutes at once the great strength and weakness of millennial movements. When they are disappointed, believers can respond in a wide variety of ways — from the anti-apocalypticist’s sigh of relief to the cheerful suicide of a true believer entering the flames or the fray, convinced that his millennial magic will protect him. The generation of the millennium, at least in southern France for the first round, and most of France and the francophone Lowlands for the second, saw two waves of millennial enthusiasm which, exceptionally, carried with them the whole culture; even the mafioso warlords attended the councils and took the oaths. And when their millennial bubble burst, at least one stream, the most radical, turned against the church, rejecting its very institutions, substituting as a medium of salvation a “textual community” in which the egalitarianism and mutual love of those committed replaced the need for a eucharist at mass. The remarkable part of the tale is that, rather than becoming followers of eccentric messiah kings who turned their followings into divine “courts,” the dissenters of the Peace movement seem to have gravitated towards a form of religious dissent that, more often than not, was more rigorous than that of the church, or at least the religiosity the church offered up for the populace (relic “veneration,” prostration before saints and crucifixes, rituals and liturgical dramas, etc.) — apostolic

Christianity, a new form of religiosity, sometimes judged heretical by the church, sometimes not. But it was always radical, always powerful in motivating social change.

Millennial movements, especially ones the size of the Peace of God, are not only rare and short-lived, but they are, as the French would put it, “vouée à l’échec.” Just because they do not succeed in reaching their own messianic goals, however, hardly implies that they are not consequential. And among the many consequences of the Peace was the launching of a whole new range of both millennialism (post-millennialism) and post-apocalyptic responses to disappointment (egalitarian, iconoclastic, apostolic communities). The efforts to shut down the popular dimension of the Peace as part of a larger effort to control the millennial wave of the 990s and 1030 brought the reacting church in direct conflict with the radical wing of a movement they had once been part of together. The Middle Ages’ great misfortune was that the men in charge so often identified their opponents as apocalyptic enemies to be annihilated and vice versa. But that is only the negative half of the story. From the Peace movement on, the history of Europe can be written more and more as a history of those cultural arenas where the elites and the commoners met, not to do war, but to do business — commercial, cultural, religious. Europe, and the world, would never be the same.