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peter the hermit: straddling the boundaries of lordship, millennialism, and heresy

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Peter the Hermit:
Straddling the boundaries of lordship, millennialism, and heresy

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

When is a hermit not a hermit?

When he is Peter the Hermit who led the Popular Crusade in the year 1096. Peter may have, indeed, been a hermit sometime before embarking on this endeavor. Both nineteenth century and modern historians point to this possibility.[1] But Peter the Hermit is better known for his "unhermit-like" behavior. He preached Pope Urban II's call to crusade against the Muslims of the Holy Land. He raised an army of paupers with the goal of marching from northern France to conquer Jerusalem. These hosts never reached their destination. Peter had lost control of his followers just beyond Constantinople in Anatolia, and the Turks soon slaughtered them except for Peter himself. He had already escaped back to Constantinople.

Perhaps even more remarkable, the deaths of thousands of Peter's followers seemed to mean little or nothing to the main armies of the First Crusade. Later, when they arrived in Constantinople, they allowed Peter to join them. He served with them as a priest who blessed them before battle and even as an ambassador to parley with the enemy. He witnessed the capture of Jerusalem and the slaughter of

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[1] Jean Flori, *Pierre L'Ermite et La Premiere Croisade* (Paris: Fayard, 1999); Leon Paulet *Recherches sur Pierre L'Hermite* (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1856); and E. O. Blake and Collin Morris, "A Hermit Goes to War: Peter and the Origins of the First Crusade," *Studies in Church History* 22 (Winter 1985), 79-107. Each of these authors, and others, has examined Peter the Hermit's life. While Blake and Morris conclude that Peter's early life before 1095 was relatively unknown, we side with the argument that Peter had, indeed, withdrawn from the world for a time before the Popular Crusade.

its citizens. Indeed, if Peter had remained a reclusive hermit during all of these events, he probably would not have entered the pages of history.

To this day, Peter the Hermit remains an enigmatic figure. Aside from his desire to lead a small army to Jerusalem, the pages of the chronicles of the First Crusade do not explicitly reveal his other goals and ambitions. But by comparing him to other wandering preachers of his time and to other figures of the First Crusade, we can attain a deeper understanding of Peter himself, why he led thousands of peasants and warriors to their deaths, and why the armies of the First Crusade allowed him to join their expedition.

Peter the Hermit established what we call “millennial spiritual lordship” by drawing upon millennial undercurrents in society. Peter and other wandering preachers gathered their own followers during a general crisis of secular and spiritual lordship, when both traditional feudal and ecclesiastic authority failed (or was perceived to have failed) to restore order to society. The origins of this particular crisis began around 950 AD and continued roughly into mid-twelfth century, with the millennial spiritual lords emerging just after the initiation of the Gregorian Reforms. While the term “millennial spiritual lordship” may be applied to later historical figures, such as Francis of Assisi, wandering preachers during this period operated roughly before the establishment and acceptance of new monastic orders, when reform energies could be perceived as orthodox and heretical, depending on which side of the reform a traditional spiritual lord, such as a member of the clergy, stood. Finally, it must be understood that while traditional secular and spiritual lordship during this period was relatively unstable, millennial spiritual lordship was the most tenuous of

the three. A millennial spiritual movement could fall apart abruptly as forces of both society and culture hindered or caused the movement to end.

Studying the culture and society that Peter the Hermit lived in gives us further insight, while at the same time complicating the narrative, for Peter can be seen to reflect many important trends of his time. We place Peter and his millennial spiritual lordship at the center of what Umberto Eco called an "apocalyptic web." Eco used this analogy to find meaning in the convoluted apocalyptic writings of Beatus of Liebana from the eighth century and Radulfus Glaber's works from the eleventh. Both had written commentaries of the Book of Revelation and interpretations of events that they thought were leading to the Apocalypse. Eco found five themes, or threads, that form the apocalyptic web in Beatus of Liebana's writings: 1). The world itself was aging and corrupt, *mundus seneceus.* 2). The end of the old world was near; the second coming of Christ was at hand. 3). The new world (or the coming 1000 years) would be a time of sabbatical peace. 4). The junction between the old world and the new would be violent. 5). The Antichrist would herald the Apocalypse. Eco further argued that many people, particularly the literate elite, within the late tenth and early eleventh centuries believed in these five themes.[2] Since the Christian apocalypse did not happen in 1000 or 1033 AD, we argue, in part, that these millennial trends continued to influence Western European society and culture, particularly in France before, during, and after the First Crusade. Furthermore, Peter the Hermit, and other errant preachers, used these apocalyptic societal

[2] Umberto Eco, "Waiting for the Millennium," in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectations and Social Change: 950-1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. Van Meter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 123-6.

undercurrents to raise themselves to statuses of lordship by attracting a number of believers to their individual causes.

Eco admitted that the criteria for the apocalyptic web were by no means exhaustive. We also do not presuppose that Peter and those like him consciously invoked the powers of this web to draw in their followers. More secular desires of lordship and wealth also guided their desires. We expand upon the apocalyptic web by including notions of medieval lordship from Thomas Bisson, Marc Bloch, and others. Moreover, popular movements like Peter the Hermit's could enter the realm of heresy. Thus, we draw upon Norman Cohn, Walter Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, and others to explain these phenomena. Millennial historians such as Richard Landes provide the templates in which to understand the millennial attitudes of the period.

The studies of secular lordship, spiritual lordship, heresy, and millennialism often do not overlap. Scholars have linked popular heresy with millennialism, or have studied heresy in contrast to orthodox spiritual lordship. Plenty has been written about the continuing crisis between church and state during the medieval period.[3] Yet we bring together here these four areas to examine the key concept of this thesis: millennial spiritual lordship.

In Chapter One, we introduce Peter the Hermit at the beginning of his career sometime around 1071, but before 1095. Here we find Peter amid the context of the perceived failure of Western European secular lordship, the knightly classes, to bring

[3] R. I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent.* 1977. (Reprint. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 46-81; Brian Tierney, ed., *The Crisis of Church and State 1050-1300.* 1964. (Reprint Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 33-36.

order to society. Peter's story is also compared with other itinerant preachers, and the millennial concepts that provide the base for their power are introduced.

Chapter Two describes the transformative role of the medieval church in response to the failure of the secular lordship. These broad reforms pursued by the church at times mimicked the behavior cycle of millennial movements. We examine the Peace of God, the Truce of God, the Gregorian Reforms, and the First Crusade within this paradigm. Finally, we show how these reforms had certain unintended consequences: the rise of wandering preachers who crossed boundaries between heresy and orthodoxy, and between the sacred and profane, in their own quest for lordship.

Chapter Three demonstrates how Peter the Hermit and these other preachers attained millennial spiritual lordship over their followers. "Orthodox" spiritual and secular lords often resisted these millennial movements using a variety of methods ranging from mere slander to accusing them of heresy and burning them. Furthermore, we show how their movements conform to the millennial behavior cycles and concepts established in the previous chapters. Peter the Hermit's Popular Crusade exemplifies this argument, even though it failed to reach Jerusalem.

Indeed, we have cast a wide web, consisting of many threads. Not only do we draw upon notions of millennialism, but also the ideas of secular and spiritual lordship, sacred versus profane, and heresy, in a historical narrative. Regarding the apocalyptic web, Eco advised "that one should choose a thread and follow it all the

way to the end."[4] For this topic, that thread is Peter the Hermit and his role in the First Crusade. Some of Peter's contemporaries such as Robert of Arbrissel, Henry of Le Mans and other errant preachers will make their appearance. But Peter will guide us through unfamiliar territory where history and story blur, and fantasy and reality are porous. Such guidance is needed, for even well known terms seem to fail us right at the beginning. For example, when is a crusade not a crusade?

When it is the First Crusade.

[4] Eco, 123-4.

Chapter Two:

The Crisis of Secular Lordship

The Story of Pierre L'Ermite

Sometime around the year 1071, a man then known as Pierre L'Ermite found himself wounded and taken prisoner during the succession crisis in Flanders. Presumably, he was taken for ransom because he was a noble, born in 1053 to his father Reginald L'Ermite. The Ermite family was a branch of minor nobles from Clermont, in the region of Auvergne. The Ermites had served the Count of Boulogne during the strife in Flanders. For Pierre, this military endeavor had ended in failure. After being released, he married Beatrix de Roussi who came from a prominent Norman family. She bore him two children, a son also named Pierre and a daughter named Aleide (or Alix). But after three years of marriage, Beatrix died. The tragedies of both being captured and the death of his wife must have struck him deeply.

Pierre, perhaps, perceived himself as a failed lord in both society and at home. In this version of the story, he realized that God was calling him to do something more worthwhile. When he was younger, he had met the future Pope Urban II through his uncle, who was a monk at the monastery at Cluny. Perhaps this inspired Pierre to live according to the vocation that his surname suggested. He put his children under the protection of some friends, joined a sacred order, and

eventually withdrew to the forests of Liege, a popular place for hermits and recluses to reside. There, Pierre L'Ermite became Peter the Hermit.[5]

Peter the Hermit's example of withdrawal from the world was nothing new, even in the late eleventh century. He had followed a long tradition within Christianity to separate oneself from the world and live an apostolic life according to the example of Jesus in the New Testament. Some Christians, seeking a deeper form of spirituality away from society, lived a communal and cenobitical life in monasteries. Others preferred the eremitical life of the anchorite, alone in the wilderness. Yet many people at the time did not see this lifestyle as a mere withdrawal from the world, but as a call to a more strict and demanding life, one worthy of admiration. Even St. John, who is credited for writing the Book of Revelation, lived as an itinerant prophet.[6] The early medieval period in Europe witnessed an increase in the number of hermits founding religious communities (by both accident and intent). Many of these communities became monasteries, guided by the Rule of St. Benedict. By the late eleventh century, Western Europe had seen tremendous growth in number of monasteries being founded. The crisis of secular lordship and its response contributed to this.

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[5] Paulet, 50-1, 67-8, and 149; Flori, and E.O. Blake and Morris; Both Paulet and Flori's works give extensive background of Peter the Hermit prior to his appearance in 1096. Both list the various Latin and French names Peter the Hermit is known by: Petrus Heremita, Peter D'Acheri, and others. E.O. Blake and Colin Morris also examine Peter the Hermit's life by questioning the primary sources about him. His name change here simply demonstrates what may have been his desire to become a new person—comparatively to the story of Abram becoming Abraham in the Old Testament.

[6] Bernard McGinn, "John's Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Mentality," in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages.* Ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 12.

While both monks and hermits valued the life of solitude, they often did not see eye-to-eye. Although powerful nobles and even kings would seek the advice of a hermit, the Benedictine monks viewed these hermits as rivals, because often these hermits would not remain recluses. Instead, they would return to the world to spread their messages to the common people. Even regular clergy would resent the preaching of a hermit or monk who left a monastery or the wilderness to travel.[7]

To the common person of the late eleventh century, these errant preachers came like messiahs from the wilderness. From the forests they emerged from their solitude and contemplation to spread their utopian messages. They also left the monasteries in the hills to seek purer forms of spiritual life. They could be found along the roadsides or in villages, where the masses huddled around them, revering them like holy men, and taking bits of hair or bathwater from them as personal relics. They often preached against simony, the buying and selling of church offices, while operating under notions of spiritual reform being promulgated by the papacy itself at this time. Western Europeans were experiencing a need for a deeper spiritual awareness and connection with God in the wake of a world in crisis. These men spoke to that need and the people listened.

These errant hermits and preachers used their words to construct a kind of lordship different from the hierarchies of their secular and even religious contemporaries. Some led mass movements that ended in heresy. Some eventually

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[7] Henrietta Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe 1000-1150* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), 1-3 and 83-4; Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century.* (Reprint, 2002. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996), 23 and 60-3.

held positions within the church itself, becoming bishops. Others started their own monasteries. Almost everywhere they went with their ascetic poverty they appealed to the common person. They disrupted or influenced both secular and ecclesiastical power structures with their accusations of corruption. At times, they preached without a license. As their numbers grew, they set the foundations for the great European spiritual reformations of the twelfth century and beyond. Many of the new orders of monasticism emerging in the twelfth century could trace their origins back to the late eleventh.[8] The itinerant preacher of the late eleventh and early twelfth century attained spiritual lordship by gaining access to the latent millennialism within society. He attracted followers by offering them both sacred and material wealth. At times, these actions caused him to straddle the boundary between orthodoxy and heresy.

Peter the Hermit, as the leader of the Popular Crusade, was one of the first of these preachers. His immediate contemporary was Robert of Arbrissel, who advocated for the stronger presence of women in the church. Others include Tanchelm of Utrecht, Henry of Le Mans, and Ramihrdus of Cambrai. All three advocated for church reform and gathered their own followings. All of these men challenged conventional and orthodox power structures with their messages. As we shall see, some prospered as their reforms took root with the populace or gained the favor of powerful nobility. Others succeeded for a time before either falling from grace, meeting a violent end, or both.

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[8] Leyser, 74-6; and Constable, 14-7.

For these millennial spiritual preachers, we use the terms “errant,” “itinerant,” and “wandering” interchangeably. All three connote the idea of a person traveling from one place to another. The Latin etymology of the first term also suggests that a person might be mistaken, or has gone astray. This meaning can also be deployed when it comes to their religious messages, especially in the discussion about heresy in chapter two and the orthodox reactions they faced we cover in chapter three. We surmise that one person’s heresy is another’s orthodoxy, and vice versa. This idea is simplistic, but true, even though events surrounding a given preacher accused of heresy often cast their own complicated web for the historian to unravel. To understand these errant preachers, their quest for millennial lordship, and those who opposed them, one must first understand their society and culture in which they lived.

Although wandering preachers existed elsewhere in Europe, for convenience and necessity, we focus our studies on those who lived and preached in France, the Netherlands, and the Valley of the Rhine. These regions were the heartlands of what has been called feudal society, and from about the mid-tenth through the mid-twelfth centuries these regions were also at the center of a crisis in that society. Secular power, inherent in the feudal hierarchy, no longer offered (or perceived to offer) much protection for the average person or even members of the church. Spiritual power, too, was threatened and rivaled by the strife in the secular sphere. Popular movements headed by millennial spiritual lords emerged during a time when feudalism began to break down in many areas.

The Failures of Secular Lordship

By the eleventh century, feudalism was a victim of its own successes. The lords and knightly classes of feudal society had failed to bring order to Western Europe, even though society had relatively stabilized after the Danish raids of the eighth and ninth centuries had ended. Feudalism had developed, in part, as a method of protection against barbarian raids in the wake of the collapse of central government after the Western Roman Empire fell, and later after the breakup of Charlemagne's empire. A lord was supposed to defend his followers from enemies abroad, but could also settle disputes within his own fief. Feudalism itself, however, hindered the formation of strong rulers and centralized government, given the relative independence these lords possessed. The possession and control of land determined the potency and effectiveness of a secular lord. With land, a lord could obtain vassals and order legitimate violence. But by the year 1000, most of the best arable land in Western Europe had been claimed. Even dynasties of lordship were unstable. Upon a lord's death, a high kingdom or the lowest fief risked a succession crisis as the lord's sons struggled against each other, bucking against the tradition of primogeniture. Those seeking their own rule were forced into less desirable areas to establish their own lordships, to ally themselves with more powerful lords, or to give up and enter a monastery.[9]

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[9] Constable, 46; See also Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society.* Trans. L. A. Manyon. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1961), for traditional views of feudalism, kinship, and lordship in France in the medieval period; and Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). Bisson offers a more contemporary view of these issues.

Around the year 1000 and as the eleventh century continued, the failures of secular lordship became more pronounced as feudal lords feuded with each other for the control of land and power. Especially in France, under the weak Capetian dynasty, centralized authority lessened as knights and castellans fought over land and established their own strongholds. A generalized violence generated by knights escalated, as evidenced by the numbers of castles being built. Flanders itself was known for its feuding lords and castellans, given the number of grievances generated in the historical record there. The violent struggle for secular lordship spilled over into nearby regions. A good example of this would be the famous case of William the Conqueror's invasion of England in 1066. The First Crusade was also another example of the struggle for secular lordship spreading beyond the feudal heartlands of Europe. Despite efforts of the church and society to stem or contain the violence, this crisis of lordship continued into the twelfth century.[10]

We see this process exemplified Peter the Hermit's involvement in the succession crisis in Flanders, 1070-71. Robert I "the Frisian" had usurped the throne there from his nephew Arnulf III. Peter the Hermit's family became involved, and Peter himself ended up being taken prisoner. Arnulf III died in battle in 1071, and Robert I violently restored order by expelling all who opposed him (but his death in 1127 caused another succession crisis).[11] Peter himself somehow failed to establish

[10] Thomas Head and Richard Landes, ed., *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1992) 12-3; and Bisson, 63: Map 1.

[11] Bisson, 58, 142, 186-88, and 190.

a lordship typical of the knightly class there. And later, upon the death of his wife, he gave up the lordship over his own household.

What is Lordship?

Thomas N. Bisson gives us a both concrete and comprehensive definition of lordship and its implications in broad strokes. The eleventh and twelfth centuries were the Age of Lordship, with lordship…

> "…referring diversely to personal commands over dependent people who might be peasants in quasi-servile status or knights or vassals having or seeking elite standing; the word also denotes the value or extent of such dependencies (patrimony, *dominium*). The lordship held by nobles accounted for much of the exercise of licit power around 1100."[12]

Throughout feudal Europe, secular lords maintained their rule through violence and the threat of violence. They distinguished themselves through martial prowess, the command of armed horsemen, the construction of castles, and the mastership over peasants. According to Bisson, the bondage of such servants simply replicated slavery.[13] While slavery per se had been mostly abandoned within Christendom, serfdom was still acceptable. Patrimony, the servitude of one man to another, was both familiar and the norm, inclusive of the idea that each person owed a kind of fealty to a master. To have lordship meant power.

The feudal hierarchy, as fuzzy and complicated as it was, relied on these concepts. Even Marc Bloch, who gave us a concise and basic inquiry into the origins of feudalism, admitted that "feudalism" itself could be self-contradictory. Feudalism

[12] Bisson, 3.
[13] Bisson, 47.

goes beyond a lord handing out property (the fief, *feodum*) to his subjects; yet that remains its core. Feudalism varied from one region to the next. The Holy Roman Empire, for example, relied on an ecclessiarchy enmeshed within the secular lordship for governance. In some areas, especially on Europe's "periphery," such as Byzantium, feudalism was not practiced at all.[14] Yet, for our purposes, a fusion of both Bloch's understanding of feudal society and Bisson's definition of lordship will serve as our concept of lordship. Lords both enticed servants with material wealth and coerced them with violence. Furthermore, and perhaps paradoxically, a fundamental aspect of feudal obligations included protection from violence and the maintenance of order in society.

We also use the term "lordship" to apply to both secular and spiritual rulers, but recognize the differences between them. The conventional term "lordship," when applied the medieval period, connotes a feudal society ruled by a knightly class. But this can be problematic, since certain clerics were certainly lords, and not just in an ecclesiastical sense. Thus, we stretch this term to include all varieties of lordship held by the church, especially since the crisis of the secular lordship gave the church the opportunity to increase its own power, both spiritual and secular, via the Gregorian Reforms.

Yet must we also differentiate between "secular lordship" and "spiritual lordship." Secular lordship is finite, bound by physical restrictions and resources. Spiritual lordship is perceived as infinite, bound only by the faith and imaginations of its followers who give power to an individual spiritual lord. Secular lordship is

[14] Bloch, xx and 441-7.

governed by the tangible, empirical, rewards and possible punishments that a follower can receive from a given lord. Peter the Hermit's captivity after his failure in Flanders might be seen as the execution of secular power. A lord rewarding a vassal with land or gifts can also be seen in this regard. Robert I "The Frisian" justified his ascension in Flanders by expelling all thieves and pillagers, which was an exercise of his powers of secular lordship.[15]

With spiritual lordship, these rewards, benefits, and punishments are not tangible, but they can be perceived as such. The threat of excommunication by the church can be an exercise in spiritual lordship. The sacraments bestowed by the church can have both tangible and intangible qualities, such as the notion of the transubstantiation of bread during communion. The concept of spiritual salvation was very real to people during this age, and the church claimed to have the monopoly on this power. By Peter the Hermit's time, the church had already begun to assert its power over secular rulers outside the church. Thomas Bisson argued that the violence and discord generated by the feuding knightly class eventually led to the origins of centralized European statehood. A strong state could limit the amount of violence and restore order.[16] This argument might also be seen as applying to the church, however, for with the Gregorian Reforms, the papacy began acting like the centralized head of Christendom.

The need for reform was greater than ever for the church. Such reforms are discussed at further length in Chapter 2. Suffice to say that church leaders, much

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[15] Bisson, 142-3.
[16] Bisson, 5, 9, and 18.

like the monks at the time, desired to see the church restored to the more pristine state in which had supposedly existed shortly after the time of Jesus. This exercise of spiritual lordship would not go uncontested by secular rulers, the knightly class. Emerging from this tension came the Peace of God, the Truce of God, the Investiture Controversy, and finally the First Crusade. All of these came about in the wake of the year 1000, when many people thought time itself was nearing its end. The failure of secular lordship and the violence it caused was a sign that the new Christian millennium approached. The Apocalypse was at hand.

The Cycle of Apocalypse and Millennial Movements

Just before the year 1000, Peace of God councils were created to reign in secular violence. Bishops and the laity would often gather to pass judgment on pillagers, raiders, and anybody else who caused strife in a community. Relics of saints also played a central role during these councils, attracting both pilgrims and penitents. One of the first of these took place in Aquitaine in 975. Bishop Guy of Le Puy threatened to excommunicate those who had just pillaged the churches of his diocese, if they did not come to his council and swear to uphold the peace in the land. In 994, both the bishop and the duke of Limoges held a peace council in response to a plague that was sweeping the region. Those who gathered there brought a number of relics. A massive three-day penance ensued to bring an end to the plague. The Peace of God movements and councils continued well into the eleventh century. Richard Landes argues that these early movements were actually

apocalyptic and millennial.[17] We examine that view more fully in the next chapter, but it also forms a part of our story here.

Millennialism is a branch of Christian eschatology, based on scripture found in the Book of Revelation that prophesizes events leading up to and describing the thousand-year imprisonment of Satan and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. However, scripture from other sections of the Bible can fall into this definition, such as parts of the Book of Daniel. As Umberto Eco and others have pointed out, the apocalyptic imagery found within these passages can be open to broad interpretation, regardless of the age of history in which they are read.[18] Followers of millennialism hinge their convictions on the belief that the world itself is about to undergo a massive societal or physical transformation, or both. This change is imminent. Many of these movements, both in the medieval period and the present, collectively believe that the destruction will ultimately benefit them because of their faith. Heaven will come to Earth, bringing about a miraculous transformation in which the enemies of the faithful are punished for their transgressions.[19]

Apocalyptic traditions had existed in Europe for almost a thousand years, since the dawn of Christianity, drawing upon even earlier Judaic, Greek, and Sibylline prophetic teachings. People took prophecies found in the Book of Revelation quite literally, despite church fathers like St. Augustine dismissing such interpretations as only spiritual allegory. Generations of Christian Europeans awaited the coming of the Antichrist and the Last Days leading up to a final spiritual war,

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[17] Head and Landes, *Peace of God*, 4.
[18] Eco, 127-8.
[19] Cohn, 15.

Armegeddon. They watched for signs and omens that the end was near. By the time of the First Crusade, for example, the Prophecy of the Last Emperor surfaced. This emperor would herald the End Times. Some attributed this figure to the contemporary Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV; and others thought there would be a Second Coming of Charlemagne to fight the Muslims. These notions permeated and influenced both secular and religious politics. For example, Count of Emicho of Leiningen, who trailed Peter the Hermit's Popular Crusade, supposedly believed himself to be the Last Emperor as he and his forces marched through the Rhineland, putting Jews to death if they did not convert to Christianity.[20]

Those who believe that the Apocalypse will come live with a different perception of time than others do. The idea of history being progressive would be quite foreign to them. Instead, as many believed throughout the Middle Ages, time was winding toward the Apocalypse. According to Richard Landes, those who believe that the Apocalypse is fast approaching live with a frenetic perception of time. Indeed, there is a difference between even millennial time and apocalyptic time. With millennial time, the advent of apocalypse is uncertain. But with apocalyptic time, the Apocalypse is imminent.[21]

Popular millennial movements, according to Landes, experience similar patterns of behavior when they enter apocalyptic time. The first is that their idea of persecution will soon end with the righteous judgment of God. "Millennialists have

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[20] Cohn, 25-35.

[21] Richard Landes, *Heaven on Earth*: *The Varieties of Millennial Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 12-13.

passion for justice," Landes argues. "They think they know good and evil well."[22] They are prone to semiotic arousal—the simplest event can hold divine importance in their fired imaginations. They may even join voluntary communities, abandoning past relationships and belongings. A charismatic leader may head such a community, which often claims to be anti-authoritarian. Followers within such communities may be prone to violence, seeing their acts as justified in light of the coming apocalypse. Such communities and movements, however, are often short lived. Once disappointment sets in, any hallucinations of apocalyptic fantasies are soon dispelled.[23]

Jay Rubenstein inadvertently places the First Crusade partly under this paradigm. He argues that, for the crusaders, the farther they went into the expedition to the Holy Land, the deeper they entered into their apocalyptic fantasies. One can easily imagine, therefore, that Peter the Hermit himself must have used apocalyptic rhetoric to gather and spur his followers.[24]

Peter the Hermit's exact rhetoric is not known to us. But the Popular Crusade and even the First Crusade exhibit patterns of behavior that fit under Landes' working hypothesis. Were the crusaders solely occupied by the Apocalypse? Probably not. But faith gave them a sense of urgency, as did the prospect of gaining material wealth from the Holy Land. They did, however, live in a world were fantasy and reality overlapped, if we are to believe the sources. According to Fulcher of

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[22] Landes, *Heaven on Earth,* 12.
[23] Landes, *Heaven on Earth,* 3-17
[24] Jay Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven: The First Crusade and the Quest for Apocalypse* (New York: Basic Books 2011), xiv.

Chartres, after crusaders stormed Antioch, a peasant named Peter Bartholomew received a vision from St. Andrew the Apostle as to the location of the spear of Longinus, the spear that had supposedly pierced Christ's side. Furthermore, Fulcher of Chartres wrote that God spoke to the crusaders after Muslim forces besieged the city. "Yet the Lord, not unmindful of the Franks, appeared to many. Often they asserted this. Being present, in comforting them, He promised that the people would rejoice in victory."[25]

The movements of other itinerant preachers followed the apocalyptic pattern, more or less. Throughout the eleventh century, these errant men helped transform medieval society through their reforms. Peter the Hermit, however, exemplified a shift in the tone of these movements where faith and action combined to eradicate a profane enemy. After Peter the Hermit and the First Crusade, spirituality within France and Western Europe became even more intense, the threat of the "other" more magnified, popular movements and wandering preachers even more common. These set the foundations and were examples for later religious movements to follow, both heretical and orthodox.[26]

Peter the Hermit's Story

Our knowledge of Peter the Hermit originates from the chroniclers of the First Crusade themselves. Both Robert the Monk and Guibert of Nogent were present at

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[25] Edward Peters, *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, 2nd Edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 76-7.

[26] R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe.* 2nd Ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 18-25; and Leyser, 1-6; Constable, 12-18 and 60-2.

the Council of Clermont when the call for crusade was promulgated. Both wrote about Peter soon after the First Crusade ended. Anna Komnene, daughter of the Byzantine emperor Alexius II, gives a brief account of when Peter the Hermit arrived in Constantinople at the head of his armies of paupers. Peter also appears in the anonymous *Gesta Francorum*. Other primary sources were written after Peter the Hermit's death in 1115. These include accounts by Albert of Aix, a cannon at Aix-la-Chapelle, and William of Tyre. Albert wrote in the mid-twelfth century. William wrote later that century. Other fragmented accounts of Peter the Hermit exist. All of these place Peter at the forefront of the First Crusade, perhaps even its true initiator. Despite this prominent role early on, he becomes tertiary in these accounts after his and millennial spiritual lordship over the Popular Crusade ends with the massacre of his followers. He appears less frequently as the crusading warlords of Europe take the center stage, before vanishing altogether from the story. Despite this treatment, historians have pieced together a general history of Peter the Hermit. What is generally known is this:

Peter the Hermit hailed from Amiens, perhaps formerly being a monk, since in the accounts he dressed like one. As mentioned in this chapter's introduction, more modern historians have placed Peter within the strife over Flanders in 1070-71. There he was captured, possibly held for ransom. He later married and had two children. He retired from society for a time after the death of his wife before emerging to become a millennial spiritual lord. We demonstrate this by showing how Peter's name changed from Pierre L'Ermite. But his name change is also an

example of the confusion surrounding his name, which is discussed further below.[27] He may have traveled to the Holy Land, perhaps even Jerusalem, sometime before the Council of Clermont and was mistreated by the Turks. He may have met with Pope Urban II himself to relate his misfortunes.[28]

Peter debuts as an itinerant preacher in 1095, preaching Urban II's call for a crusade. The common poor gathered around him because of his apostolic lifestyle, powers of oration, and charity. In one account "he restored prostitutes to their husbands with gifts."[29] In the spring of 1096, Peter gathered a small army at Amiens. He left on March 8, accompanied in part by Godfrey of Bouillon (who would later establish himself as the first Frankish king over Jerusalem, the duke of Lower Lorraine, who was described as dressing like a monk, according to Robert the Monk.[30]

The relationship between Peter the Hermit and Duke Godfrey is important to note. For it helps explain why the main crusading armies had accepted Peter after his Popular Crusade had failed. Peter had had some powerful allies within the knightly class who supported him. It also reveals that Peter may still have identified himself as part of the knightly class, including its desire for lordship, even though he had taken a more religious path. This relationship also helps explain Peter's fate at the end of Chapter Three.

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[27] Paulet,180-1
[28] Anna Komnene, *The Alexiad.* Trans. E. R. A. Sewter (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 275.
[29] Peters, *The First Crusade,* 103.
[30] John Riley-Smith, *The Crusades and the Idea of Crusading*, 1986 (Reprint. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 58-9; and Carol Sweetenham, trans., *Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade: Historia Iherosolimitana* (Hants, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 83.

In April, this ragtag army marched across the Rhineland into central Europe. Along the way, bands from this army persecuted Jews, as contingents of the First Crusade would also later do. A knight, Walter of Sansavoir, led the vanguard of this army. By May, this vanguard entered into Hungary and the Byzantine borderlands. Some Italians joined them. While Peter gathered more recruits, Walter's forces skirmished with Byzantine garrisons. Peter the Hermit's armies seemed rife with indiscipline. Meanwhile, soldiers of fortune sought to imitate Peter the Hermit by raising their own small armies to plunder parts of southeastern Europe. The forces under Folkmar and Gottschalk, both priests, and Count Emicho all met with violent ends.[31]

By August 1, Walter had arrived in Constantinople and Peter the Hermit met him there with the main army of the People's Crusade. A deal had been reached with Emperor Alexius I, who agreed to ferry Peter's army across the Bosporus. But once across, Peter's army seemed to fragment along French, German, and Italian line. Each group elected its own leaders. The Turks slaughtered these smaller armies one by one. By October 21, Peter found himself without an army, himself having fled back to Constantinople.[32]

Peter remained in Constantinople until the main armies of the First Crusade began arriving in November. He marched forth with them that spring. In May of 1097, the armies captured Nicaea and campaigned throughout Asia Minor that summer before besieging Antioch on October 20. By January 1098 the siege

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[31] Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, 58-9, 159.
[32] Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, 159-60.

worsened for the crusaders. Peter attempted to escape but followers of Bohemond, the leader of the Norman contingents, captured and returned him. Antioch fell to the crusaders on June 3, 1098, but was soon besieged again a Muslim army, led by the Muslim leader Kerbogha. Given that the crusaders had just endured a long besiegement, to become besieged so soon afterwards led to a desperate situation. The discovery of the Spear of Longinus (also called the Holy Lance) by Peter Bartholomew on June 14 gave the crusaders hope. On June 25, Peter the Hermit became the lead ambassador for the crusaders in their negotiations with Kerbogha.[33]

After this, Peter the Hermit fades from the chronicles, save for brief sermons outside the walls of Jerusalem in 1099, right before the city fell, and at the Battle of Ascalon. Duke Godfrey of Bouillon had taken command of Jerusalem's defenses, and ruled Jerusalem until he died in 1100. Meanwhile, Peter remained in Jerusalem for sometime before returning to northern France. He founded a monastery at Huy sometime shortly after 1101. He died in 1115.

Peter the Hermit's contemporary chroniclers viewed him as a curiosity and stress his importance as the leader of the Popular Crusade. His achievements are remarkable, despite leading most of his followers to their deaths. He defied Pope Urban II's rule that only members of the knightly class could participate in the pilgrimage. While exact numbers of Peter's own followers are unknown, an

[33] Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, 58-60, 160; and Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 342-344.

estimated 150,000 people went on the First Crusade. The vast majority of these were poor, women, elderly, or both. The "fighting elite" was in the minority.[34]

For a time Peter the Hermit attained millennial spiritual lordship over his followers. Modern historians have not discussed this viewpoint. Just as the original chroniclers, they bind Peter's story within the larger story of the Crusades. This is true for most historians from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Despite their age, histories from the nineteenth century provide some interesting insights into Peter the Hermit's personal life. Buried within Michaud's *A History of the Crusades* one finds footnote observing that Peter the Hermit had another name: "Peter of Achiris," in the Chronicle in the Counts of Anjou—"*'Heremita quidam Petrus Achiriensis.'"* Michaud also draws from Adrian Burland, who wrote in the fifteenth century that Peter Hermit hailed from Amiens and was a man of nobility or fame.[35] Leon Paulet's *Recherches sur Pierre L'Hermite et La Croisade* from 1856 contains a series of correspondence between Paulet and number of archivists. According to this source, Peter hailed from Picardy, and his name "Hermit" may be a misnomer. Instead, he should be called Peter the "Ermite" or "Eremite." That is, he was a member of a house of lesser nobles known as the "Ermites" or "Eremites." He also may have traveled to England just after the Council of Clermont.[36]

German historians have their own viewpoints on Peter the Hermit. Peter

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[34] Thomas F. Madden, *The New Concise History of the Crusades: Updated Edition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 11-12.

[35] Joseph Francois Michaud, *The History of the Crusades: Vol. 1*, trans. W. Robson (New York: Redfield, 1853), 41. "*Petrus Heremita, Ambianesis, vir nobilis, prima aetute rei militari deditus, tametsi litteris optime imbutus, sed corpore deformis as brevis statuae."*

[36] Ordericus Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy: Vol. 3*, 1854. Reprint. Trans. Thomas Forester (New York: AMS Press, 1968), Paulet, 34 and 128.

Hagenmeyer, who wrote in 1879, argued that Peter the Hermit's visions from God caused him to initiate the First Crusade, but dismissed others who speculate that Peter preached the crusade before Clermont.[37] Heinrich Von Sybel, too, asserted the Peter received visions from God. Afterwards, he "traveled about, dressed as a pilgrim, with a sunburnt face and beard reaching to his middle, riding upon an ass…"[38] But Von Sybel does appear to cite some Turkish sources. Peter had become the spiritual leader of the ten thousand camp followers who trailed along with the main crusading army. The Turks called either Peter "King Tafur", the king of the beggars, or somebody else had been elected this title. Von Sybel truncates Peter's story in the larger context of the First Crusade, even more so than other historians of the period. [39]

Among certain religious circles in the early twentieth century Peter the Hermit's story as a preacher was source of inspiration. The best example is *Peter the Hermit: A Tale of Enthusiasm* written by Daniel Ayres Goodsell, a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He freely drew from Joseph Francois Michaud and another historian Milman, while finding it "necessary to chasten the too pronounced Roman sympathies of Michaud by the equally pronounced Protestantism of Milman."[40] Goodsell takes into account the different interpretations between Hagenmeyer and Von Sybel, no doubt through religious lenses. And yet Goodsell's

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[37] Blake and Morris, 89.
[38] Heinrich Von Sybel, *The History and Literature of the Crusades,* trans. Lady Duff Gordon (London: Chapman and Hall, 1861), 29-30.
[39] Von Sybel, 30.
[40] Daniel Ayres Goodsell, *Peter the Hermit: A Tale of Enthusiasm* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1906), 3-4.

work does not praise the entirety of Peter's career. Indeed, Peter's example should serve as a cautionary tale where a "monomaniac" goes beyond enthusiasm, fanaticism and sound judgment. The idea that Peter was a monomaniac may touch upon notions of lordship, but it fails to take into account that Peter probably had both spiritual and material desires to reach Jerusalem. He simply needed followers to help get him there. Whether or not these followers were expendable pawns is questionable. But Goodsell remarked that Peter had "seen enough of war to know that his undisciplined mob could meet but one fate."[41] Still, Goodsell turns Peter the Hermit's example into a lesson to be learned. This goes beyond treating him as a simple catalyst for the First Crusade, as seen in earlier and later histories.

Just like their medieval predecessors, modern historians lump the Popular Crusade within the First Crusade. Peter's story is interspersed throughout Thomas Asbridge's recent work, *The First Crusade*. Asbridge sums up the Popular Crusade as a "ramshackle horde" that did not play to Urban II's "orderly plans and threatened to derail the entire campaign before it had properly begun."[42] Peter's story is interspersed throughout the Asbridge's narrative of the First Crusade. Both Asbridge and Thomas F. Madden highlight how Peter the Hermit's example roused other leaders and armies in Europe. But many of these other contingents never reached Constantinople. Some were content with persecuting Jews in the Rhineland. Local forces of the lands in which they tried to pass through destroyed some of these other large bands. Peter's The Popular Crusade, despite the hardships it faced is notable

[41] Goodsell, 44.
[42] Asbridge, 82.

because it reached Constantinople before the main crusading armies, and it succeeded whereas other similar movements had failed.[43] Jean Flori's *Peter L'Ermite et Le Premiere Croisade* explores Peter the Hermit's story in further detail, comparing the validity of the main primary sources. Throughout the work, Peter the Hermit is featured more prominently, the primary sources analyzed more thoroughly. Flori examines the tradition that Peter the Hermit initiated the First Crusade. This tradition, he notes, originated with later chroniclers such as Albert of Aix and William of Tyre. This echoes Hagenmeyer's sentiments. The idea that Peter the Hermit initiated the First Crusade actually originated from later or non-Frankish chronicles, such as with Albert of Aix and Anna Komnene. Finally, E.O. Blake and C. Morris surmised that no other original sources on Peter the Hermit have emerged since Hagenmeyer's study.[44]

Robert of Arbrissel and other Itinerant Preachers

The idea that certain preachers around 1100 were aspiring to millennial spiritual lordship cannot rest on Peter the Hermit's story alone. He had quite a few contemporaries following an apostolic life. There is no evidence that Peter had contact with these other men. But there are similar patterns to each of their stories, despite some divergence of their missions and methods.

Perhaps the most illustrative of these men was Peter's immediate contemporary Robert of Arbrissel (ca. 1045-1116). In 1095, about the same time

[43] Madden, *The New Concise History of the Crusades*, 18-9; and Asbridge, 87-8.
[44] Blake and Morris, 79.

Peter the Hermit began preaching, Robert was becoming a hermit, retiring to the forests of Craon near his hometown. He attracted a number of followers there, founding a new abbey called La Roe. During his previous career he had been a licensed priest who had studied at the University of Paris. He soon became an itinerant preacher at the request of Pope Urban II himself. It is unknown whether or not Robert preached the First Crusade, but he did become an advocate for Gregorian Reform. This was not without consequences. In 1098 he received criticism for not supervising the behavior of his followers, especially when it came to the actions of the women who supported him.

Despite criticism leveled against him, in the early 1100s Robert's popularity continued to grow as he founded monasteries throughout France. His most famous monastery was at Fontevraud, where he placed two women as superiors before returning to his errant preaching. But the sharp criticism persisted. He was accused of having sexual relations with his female followers. Toward the end of his life he settled disputes between rivals within the nobility and factions within the clergy.

Near the end of his life he foresaw his own death. He was buried with distinction beneath the altar at Fontevraud. In the succeeding years, the monastery prospered, founding fifty daughter monasteries around France, including three in England. Over his lifetime he crisscrossed boundaries between being an orthodox preacher and a borderline heretic. He was a student turned priest, who in turn

became a hermit and then an errant preacher who could settle disputes between secular and religious lords.[45]

Not all of these errant preachers were rewarded with such peaceful and distinguished deaths. Peter the Hermit and Robert of Arbrissel achieved some degree of papal protection. Peter may not have been a licensed preacher, but his message fell somewhat in line with Urban II's goals. Robert straddled the line of orthodoxy and heresy further, opening himself up to accusations of sexual misconduct with his female devotees. Still these two men died rather peacefully. Others like them who were accused of heresy were punished for it. These include Ramihrdus of Cambrai, whose short career of advocating church reform in 1076 or 1077 ended with him being burned as a heretic.

Tanchelm of Utrecht (sometimes called Tanchelm of Antwerp) had a brief career starting in 1112. Before this he may have been a monk. He preached against the excesses of the clergy throughout the Low Countries: Antwerp, Brabant, Flanders, and Zeeland. But his opponents, the bishops and clergy of Utrecht, claimed that he rejected every aspect of the church and its sacraments, that he was an apostate and heretic who had deceived a large number of followers, and that he had sexual misconduct with women.[46]

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[45] Bruce L. Venarde, *Robert of Arbrissel: A Medieval Religious Life* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), xv-xxix.Venarde's work clearly places Robert of Arbrissel in a positive light. But since it is the only modern comprehensive work on Robert, we use it exclusively for our study of him.

[46] Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, ed. *Heresies of the High Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 96-7

We should take many of these accusations with more than just a grain of salt. Some historians, such as Malcolm Lambert, have interpreted such libel at face value.[47] Others have seen through these insults, realizing that they are commonplace throughout treatises on heretics from this period.[48]

Regardless to the truth of these issues, it is undeniable that Tanchelm had become popular among the laity. Thus, he was a threat to the clergy of Utrecht. Supposedly his followers drank his bathwater. At one point, he even traveled to Rome for aid. But upon returning to Utrecht, a priest came from behind and bashed in his head.

Other errant preachers existed during this time. Henry of Le Mans began preaching his supposed heresy around 1116, and continued until 1148 when he died in prison. During his time he recruited other preachers to his cause, such as Peter of Bruys. Both serve as an example of how supposed heretics could operate for years, if not decades, before the church intervened. Eudo of Brittany, who used his followers to attack churches and monasteries in 1145, was like Peter the Hermit. Both promoted violence and had emerged from the forests of Liege. Arnold of Brescia, though just outside the context of the feudal heartlands, also used violence alongside his teachings in Lombardy in the 1140s. Eudo, and Arnold are not central

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[47] Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 3rd Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5 and 52-3. Lambert wrote that Henry of Le Mans, was an "apostate monk," one who has abandoned his faith in Christianity, which seems to rely on the literal interpretation of the sources. This, however, does not take into account that Henry may have been simply a reformer who made enemies with the clergy.

[48] Wakefield and Evans, 96-101.

to our study, but they demonstrate the prevalence of these kinds of preachers and their popular movements in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries.

More importantly, certain themes run through the stories of these men. All of them gained popularity through their words. Their preaching lifted them into positions of power just outside the normal strata. Those who were successful became millennial spiritual lords, having drawn their power from the millennial undercurrents in society and the desire to reform both church and society.

Conclusion

These itinerant preachers were on the cusp of the later popular reform movements of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Their examples were a precedent for later movements, both sanctioned and heretical, such as the Dominican and Franciscan Friars and the Waldensian heresy respectively. Peter the Hermit's Popular Crusade showed that the latent power of the people could be drawn for a specific purpose, regardless of whether or not these movements would end in disaster.

Millennialism and demands for church reform further fueled their power and legitimized their leadership with the laity, especially the poor. Peter the Hermit, for about nine months, became like a king at the head of an army to fight the enemies of the church. Others like Robert of Arbrissel and Tanchelm of Utrecht found themselves in the middle of secular and religious politics, becoming friends and enemies to lords and bishops alike. Arnold of Brescia and Henry of Le Mans were cast as heretics for their demands for church reform. Yet their followers lifted them

up on high, and they operated for years on the edges of official church doctrine. The reforms of the church had trouble keeping abreast with the messages these men spread, because the church focused heavily on reforming the secular realm, instead of concerning themselves with the heresy these errant preachers might be proselytizing.

These preachers attained, if briefly, millennial spiritual lordship over their followers just outside both the knightly and priestly classes. With their words and deeds, they harnessed the power of millennialism and popular faith. These men proclaimed access to a spiritual realm that promised to fulfill the needs of the laity. For the poor, they represented conduits of wealth from on high. They were, in part, opportunists, and they provided opportunities for the average lay person for a better life, real and perceived; a life that both the official secular and spiritual lords of Europe had failed to provide.

Chapter Three:

The Crisis of Spiritual Lordship

The Struggle Without and Within

By Peter the Hermit's time, the medieval church had struggled for at least a century to stem the violence caused by the breakdown of secular lordship. Society in the feudal heartlands may have stabilized somewhat after the barbarian raids and migrations ended by the ninth century, but instead of peace, feudal lords brought strife against each other. Members of the church tried to bring order and peace to society by using what became known as the Peace of God, the Truce of God, and the Gregorian Reforms. The Peace of God councils formed just before the turn of the millennium to censure those who destabilized a community with violence, especially when such violence was used against the clergy and others who were deemed helpless. Later, the Truce of God tried to limit violence between knights, by banning violence on certain days of the week and holy days. Both the Peace of God and the Truce of God failed to bring about desired results. As a result, the Gregorian Reforms sought to spiritually change the church from within, so it could justify its claim to supremacy over the secular realm to establish peace. The First Crusade was a byproduct of these reforms. Heresy was another.

Interestingly enough, these early attempts at reform, especially the Peace of God councils, often mimicked the cycle of later movements led by millennial spiritual

lords. According to Richard Landes, millennial (and especially apocalyptic) movements often begin when a community or group believes that another group or authority unjustly persecutes them. The community then voluntarily rallies around a spiritual leader. Followers of the spiritual leader look upon their offenders through the lenses of purity versus corruption, sacred versus profane, good versus evil, without compromise. They then follow the leader through a period of frenetic activity as they struggle against their perception of evil in an attempt to bring about their own concepts of justice against the offending party. Often, however, these movements end with disappointment when certain realities come to light, and their impetus for justice wanes.[49] But they usually establish the precedent for later movements. We find aspects of the millennial movement cycle, not only with the Peace and Truce of God, but also with the Gregorian Reforms and the First Crusade.

These reforms were, in part, responses to the failures of secular lordship. The Age of Lordship undoubtedly brought with it an Age of Victims as secular lords struggled with each other and with the church, with the common people caught in between. The church believed that the order it attempted to restore to society was a divinely sanctioned order, meant to purify a corrupted secular world. Yet as the century progressed, ecclesiastical leaders realized that the church itself, in certain respects, might have become corrupted and needed to be cleansed.[50]

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[49] Landes, *Heaven on Earth,* 12-7.

[50] Amy G. Remensnyder, "Pollution, Purity, and Peace: An Aspect of Social Reform Between the Late Tenth Century and 1076," in *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France Around the Year 1000,* ed. Thomas Head and Richard Landes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 281-283.

The Gregorian Reforms were a reaction to undesired intrusion of secular lordship into papal power. Indeed, popes Gregory VII and Urban II saw the church as victim to, and corrupted by, the depredations of secular power. Gregory initiated a series of reforms that drew upon ideas found in the Peace and Truce of God movements. He also condemned the buying and selling of church offices. This, in turn, sparked the Investiture Controversy with the Holy Roman Emperor over the appointment of bishops and other church offices. While Gregory's reforms ushered in new phase in church history, where the church would not longer be the mere figurehead of Christianity, he would not live to the completion of his work. Finally, the reality was that many secular rulers, including the Holy Roman Emperor, and even many church officials, bitterly opposed these reforms and offered stiff resistance.

The Peace of God, Truce of God, and the Gregorian Reforms all contain elements of the millennial cycle as each contested the violence and powers of secular lordship. But something remarkable happened when each cycle came and went: as both secular and religious structures failed, the average person began to look inward for a more apostolic life. This, in turn, brought about some unintended consequences that neither the church nor the secular lords of Western Europe had anticipated. From these reforms emerged pilgrimages, the First Crusade, monastic reforms and reformers, and a new concern for heresy.[51] As the century progressed,

[51] Bernard Topfer, "The Cult of Relics and Pilgrimage," in *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000*, ed. Thomas Head and Richard Landes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 57.

Orthodox channels of reform would awaken he religious zeal of the common man.[52] The wandering preacher, lured by the prospect of spiritual lordship, would lead them.

Millennial Reforms at the Turn of the First Millennium

> "Thus they inflict violence on clerics and monks, and they rob the property of churches and monasteries for their own use and profit." –Abbo of Fleury[53]

The Peace of God and the related Truce of God of movements placed the shepherd's crook of the church against the swords of feudal lords during the Age of Lordship as the scale of violence and pillaging of communities increased.[54] As mentioned previously, the Peace of God councils had originated in the late tenth century, but failed to bring lasting peace to the heartlands of feudal Europe. Church officials renewed the Peace of God in 1041. In spite of this, many lords continued to turn away from its rules and practiced the arbitrary violence the Peace of God tried to inhibit. Violence, however, was not the only problem that the church dealt with. The papacy also tried to prevent the buying and selling of church offices by the aristocracy. All of these required greater assertions of papal power and, indeed, Rome was ascending in power during this time but with great difficulty.

Throughout this complicated cycle, the church's goal was to limit the violence caused by secular lords, pacify the lands of Western Europe, and assert its claim to be head of Christendom with its spiritual lordship. Early on, it needed the help of the common people, the *populus*, to pressure secular lords into compliance. The effects

[52] Lambert, 37.
[53] Head and Landes, 14-5.
[54] Head and Landes, 14.

of these reforms were often temporary. The initial enthusiasm would fade and the violence would continue often with clergy lamenting this fact. Thus, the effects of both the Peace of God and Truce of God were disappointingly temporary, necessitating the need for future action.

Peace of God councils, starting in the late tenth century and continuing into the eleventh, sought to protect the property of the church from lay people. This included both church rights and revenues. Protection also extended to members of the clergy, monks, nuns, and at times widows and noblewomen, and unarmed knights during Lent. Later the Peace of God condemned the theft of cattle and other items important for peasant agricultural labor.[55] One of the first Peace of God councils was held in 975 in Aquitaine, where the Bishop of Le Puy threatened to excommunicate plunders and those who caused violence in his lands. In 989 at Charroux, France, the Peace of God council, headed by the local bishop, declared that anybody who attacked clergymen or the poor were deemed "anathema" and "sacrilegious" and thus excommunicated.[56] Here we see concerns over persecution and corruption. Often these gatherings, such at Limoges in 994, expressed further millennial patterns when they became popular movements. An unprecedented disaster would awaken feelings of religious guilt and terror. A high-ranking church official of a region, usually a bishop, would assert his spiritual lordship and authority

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[55] Hanz-Werner Goetz, "Protection of the Church, Defense of the Law, and Reform: On the Purposes and Character of the Peace of God, 989-1038," in *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000*, ed. Thomas Head and Richard Landes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 264-265.

[56] Brian Tierney, ed. *The Middle Ages, Volume 1: Sources of Medieval History*, Fifth Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 136.

by calling a peace council. This would be followed by the arrival of relics and large crowds. These generated "a mass miracle producing euphoria" that ended when all of the lords present swore oaths and alliances of peace before the bishop. These movements were millennial because they desired collective salvation, and peace on earth.[57]

Even the name "Peace of God" itself suggests messianic dreams that God would transform society into one of peace and justice.[58] The success of each of these movements, if short lived, must have been apparent. But just after the turn of the millennium Peace of God movements had spread all over France. The 1010s and 1020s were known for the proliferation of these movements. Radulfus Glaber wrote that in 1033 Aquitaine became popular for these gatherings. People came from all over France and Burgundy to see the relics in the various communities there. The presence of these relics of saints and the common people allowed the clergy to abjure violence within the secular realm.[59]

The spiritual lordship of the bishop, representing the church, must have prevailed at these meetings, and at least for a time afterwards. Even Radulfus understood that a social transformation was taking place in 1033. Christianity was waxing in power as if "the world itself, shaking off the old, had covered itself with a shining white mantle [*candida uestis*] of churches."[60] The Latin terminology Radulfus

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[57] Richard Landes, "Between Aristocracy and Heresy: Popular Participation in the Limousin Peace of God," in *The Peace of God, Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000,* ed. Thomas Head and Richard Landes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992) 189-90.

[58] Richard Landes, "The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000," The Apocalyptic Year 1000, 258; and Landes, "Between Aristocracy and Heresy,"114.

[59] Head and Landes, 17-8.

[60] Head and Landes, 11; and Eco, 122.

used refers to the holy vestment Jesus himself wore, suggesting that Christ's second coming approached.

Although through the Peace of God the Christian church had gained some power over secular rulers, these successes were only temporary. The feuding and wars continued in France. Radulfus later lamented: "But Alas! How painful! The human race, ever forgetful of the beneficence of God, prone to evil like a dog returning to its vomit…violated its own covenant…"[61] The disappointments would continue.

Around the mid-eleventh century, the Peace of God had adapted to the continuation of violence; it became the Truce of God. While the Peace of God tried to halt violence perpetually, the Truce of God compromised. Hostilities would cease on certain days of the week or holy days. At the Bishopric of Teroanne in 1063, the bishop and the count of Hainault forbid violence from sunset on Wednesday to sunrise on Monday, from Advent to Epiphany, and Lent to Easter. Violators could face excommunication, be cursed with sickness, or both. Those accused of breaking the truce would be required to take communion before undergoing the ordeal of hot iron.[62] Again, church leaders used the threat of excommunication to enforce the will of the church. But disappointment about the failure of the Peace of God was clear as evidenced by this compromise.

Neither movement, however, was a complete failure, for they led to the founding of a number of monasteries in the eleventh century. The secular lords even

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[61] Head and Landes, 339.
[62] Tierney, *The Middle Ages,* 137-8.

contributed in the establishment of monasteries, for both the spiritual and material wealth these monasteries could bring to a region with their relics. Monasteries even advertised the relics they possessed, thus many became popular centers of pilgrimage.[63] This, in turn, brought monasteries even more wealth. But more wealth brought with it concerns that monks and nuns were not living the apostolic life, emphasizing poverty, they were supposed to lead. As an unintended consequence of reform from above, monasteries often became the forefront of spiritual reform from below. At the end of the eleventh many of the wandering preachers, like Robert of Arbrissel and Ramihrdus of Cambrai, actually came from monastic backgrounds. The cracks in the Benedictine dominance over Western European monasticism had already formed. The twelfth century would see the formation of new monastic orders, such as the Cistercians.

Meanwhile, both the Peace of God and the Truce of God had failed to bring lasting political stability to Western Europe. The fantasies of peace on earth between feuding nobles were powerful, but short lived. By the latter half of the eleventh century, these failures were more apparent, such as with the succession crisis in Flanders. Also in the latter half of the eleventh century, popes found more creative means to deal with secular violence.

[63] Topher, 43 and 53.

Gregorian Reforms and the Crisis of Spiritual Lordship

When Gregory VII became pope in 1073 (perhaps being forced into the position by popular demand from the laity and cardinals)[64] he found the church in a difficult position. The rulers of Europe continued to disobey both the Peace of God and the Truce of God. Furthermore, many of these rulers proclaimed the right to grant (or "invest") the power of bishop to whomever they chose within their own domains. Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV was the chief among these belligerents, claiming that his imperial power was greater than the power of the church when it came to the appointment of bishops and other clergy within the empire. Gregory VII obviously disagreed, arguing that the church should appoint its own bishops. This led to the Investiture Controversy. But Gregory found it difficult to justify the church's moral superiority over Henry IV, and other secular rulers when his own church had been compromised by simony and lack of ecclesiastical adherence to celibacy. Gregory also had to redress the abuses of earlier popes, such as Pope Benedict IX (c. 1012-1056), who had sold the papacy three times during his reign, the only pope who has held the papacy more than once. Thus, Gregory's reforms were multifaceted. He first wanted to assert the church's temporal and spiritual power over all of Christianity to bring the secular sphere in line with church ideals. Second, he wanted to reform the church itself. But in the end, these reforms ended up harming the papacy rather than restoring order in the secular realm. Indeed, it led to a crisis of spiritual lordship with the creation of an antipope.[65]

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[64] Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State*, 45.
[65] Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State*, 45-51.

Gregory's aims to rectify problems in the secular realm were straightforward. He first prohibited lay investiture in February 1075. Laity, not even secular rulers, could invest persons into church offices. During that March the *Dictatus Papae* was written.[66] Although it remains unclear whether or not Gregory wrote it himself or had another origin, these twenty-seven dictates asserted broad powers to the papacy and reinstated Rome's primacy over the church that had been establish in early Christianity. The pope alone could appoint, transfer, or dispose bishops. The pope himself was above the judgment of men, and the church itself was beyond the capability of erring in judgment, as witnessed by scripture. Finally, the pope himself claimed to have the power to "dispose Emperors."[67] These dictates, in turn, lay at the root the Investiture Controversy since these ideas met with much resistance by both secular and spiritual lords throughout Western Europe.

But Gregory also understood that the church itself had to lead by example. The church could not exert much influence over its subjects if it, too, was seen as corrupt, abusive, or both. Thus, he sought to return the church to the pure state in which it had supposedly existed during the time of Christ and shortly thereafter. This notion that the primitive church represented a more ideal or pure religious state ran alongside millennial undercurrents throughout the medieval period. The elimination of simony, the purchase and selling of church offices, stood near the forefront of this program, and ran parallel to the church's struggle with secular rulers. Gregory and his successors pitted the church's spiritual lordship against the secular powers of

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[66] Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State*, 49-50.
[67] Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State*, 49-50.

Holy Emperor Henry IV, who relied on his own appointed bishops and clerics to help run his empire. But these officials often had become "princes in ecclesiastical garb."[68] These reforms also implemented the old idea that clergy should be celibate and could not marry. He encouraged laity, both common and noble, to resist the actions of renegade clergymen. To press this point home, he even absolved Christians from their service to bishops and clergymen who would not follow the wishes of the papacy.

Often, itinerant monks were used to help promote these reforms. Around 1076, Ramihrdus who was a monk preached against the new bishop of Cambrai, who had accepted his investiture from the Emperor. The bishop had Ramihrdus burned as a heresiarch, a leader and spreader of heresy. Gregory VII ordered an inquiry into this matter to punish those who burned him. "This seems terrible in the extreme and if the report is true, it should be punished with canonical severity," Gregory wrote in a letter."[69] Even after Gregory's death these preachers continued to promote his reforms. Robert of Arbrissel, later in his life, opposed simony. But one of his early patrons, Bishop Sylvester of Rennes, did buy into his own office. Robert later heard his confession.[70] Tanchelm of Utrecht may have been sent by the pope himself to condemn simony in the Low Countries.[71]

Still, by Gregory VII's death in 1085, these reforms had ended in a stalemate or worse. The *Dictatus Papae* may have formed the backbone of the Gregorian

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[68] Cohn, 82
[69] Wakefield and Evans, 95 and 671.
[70] Venarde, 123.
[71] Wakefield and Evans, 96-7.

Reforms, but did not take into account the local peculiarities and traditions of a given region. Like secular rulers, many bishops themselves had long governed their bishoprics as they as saw fit. Many of these bishoprics had been relatively isolated from Rome during the raids and violence of the eighth through tenth centuries. Because of this they had time to develop their own traditions and laws, relatively independent of papal decree. Even without these problems, the lingering failures of the Peace and Truce of God continued. Secular rulers continued to ignore the church as conflicts over lordship increased and intensified in the latter half of the eleventh century. Consequently, the Holy Roman Emperor resisted the notion that the pope could dispose him. Henry IV ordered his own bishops to reject these reforms. This caused many problems within the empire itself for years afterward as princes and bishops had to side with either the emperor or the papacy. In 1080, events began to turn against Gregory. Henry IV placed Clement III (1080 – 1100) in Ravenna as the official pope, who eventually became known as the Antipope. In 1084, even many of Gregory's own trusted cardinals and bishops deserted him in the wake of Henry IV's power. His reforms may have produced excitement and genuine desire to reform the church from within. But Gregory's actions eventually led to disappointment as certain realities set in. Gregory died in exile in 1085.

With Gregory VII's defeat, succeeding popes who continued these reforms had to straddle the boundary of orthodoxy and the traditions of local bishoprics and secular rulers. If they enforced their ideas of orthodoxy too strongly, they would meet much resistance. Making dictates from on high would only bring resentment. The papacy, without its own armies, could not withstand the hosts of a powerful secular

lord. But, if the papacy failed to enforce orthodoxy, then Rome would relapse into powerless symbolism, and Western Europe would continue to be a violent place for Christians. Even worse, Western Europe now had two popes. Who was the real pope and who was the antipope? Who was orthodox and who was unorthodox? Most importantly, which possessed the legitimate powers of appointing bishops and excommunication? For the laity, this crisis of spiritual lordship led to problems of allegiance. Succeeding popes of Rome had to contend with this reality, and come up with more creative solutions.

Yet because of the crisis of spiritual lordship, the time of the errant preacher had come.

Pope Urban II and the First Crusade

When Urban II became pope in 1088, he also had to contend with Clement III and hostile imperial forces. But he had to rely on French and Norman allies for help. Indeed, Western Christendom had been split roughly along Imperial and Franco-Norman lines, depending on who supported Urban or Clement. The crisis of lordship now pertained to both the church and secular rulers. But Urban II eventually discovered a possible way to solve many of these problems when Byzantine emperor Alexius II requested aid against the Muslim Turks in March 1095. The First Crusade would potentially unify Western Europe with sanctioned violence against an external threat that was perceived as corrupt and unjust. Ideas of excess spiritual and material wealth lured both knight and peasant on this quest. The core of the issue, however, was the scarcity of resources, especially lordship, in Western

Europe. The crisis of lordship, both secular and spiritual, hinged on the fact that there were too many lords and would-be lords, and not enough land to support them. Thus, the First Crusade, dubbed as a pilgrimage, would draw many into its movement who searched for tangible wealth and intangible riches of spiritual redemption.

In November 1095, at the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban II called Europeans, especially his Franco-Norman allies, to the First Crusade. The wave of enthusiasm this generated broke the dam that kept the waters of European Christianity spiritually stagnant and divided. Although the Byzantine emperor Alexius II had requested that papacy help send aid against the Turks, the ultimate goal of the First Crusade was the liberation of Jerusalem.[72] For Urban, helping the Byzantines was secondary to his immediate goals. He saw potential remedies to the violence in the secular realm and the crisis of spiritual lordship. In Baldric of Dol's version of the speech, Urban condemned the knighthood's violence against the defenseless and the church, which harkens back to the Peace and the Truce of God:

> "Listen and learn! You, girt about with the badge of knighthood, are arrogant with great pride; you rage against your brothers and cut each other to pieces. This is not the [true] soldiery of Christ which rends asunder the sheep-fold of the Redeemer. The Holy Church has reserved a soldiery for herself to help her people, but you debase her wickedly to her hurt…. You, the oppressors of children, plunderers of widows; you guilty of homicide, of sacrilege, robbers of another's rights; you who await the pay of thieves for the shedding of Christian blood—as vultures smell fetid corpses, so do you sense battles from afar and rush to them eagerly."[73]

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[72] Riley-Smith, *The Crusades and The Idea of Crusading,* 21-22.
[73] Peters, *The First Crusade*, 31.

In another version of the speech, as told by Robert the Monk, Urban addresses real reasons behind the crisis of secular lordship. There were too many would-be lords and knights and not enough land to support them:

> "For this land you inhabit, hemmed in on all sides by the sea and surrounded by mountain peaks, cannot support your shear numbers: it is not overflowing with abundant riches and indeed provides scarcely enough food for even those who grow it. That is why you fight and tear at each other, are constantly at war and wound and kill each other."[74]

Urban sought to direct violence among Christians outward, and to enhance further the spiritual lordship of the church, by pointing out the scarcity at home and promoting the notion of a particular kind of scarcity abroad. The scarcity at home was tangible. Famine had broken out in parts of France just prior to 1095. Many of these famines had already resulted in mass pilgrimage, which were in reality waves of refugees. Urban must have known that his message would arouse passionate hysteria in those who heard it, For Urban had enticed the knight class with the idea of possessing the Holy Land and Jerusalem.[75]

Urban speeches often invoked the notion that Jerusalem and the Holy Land was a place of both material wealth and external sacred space. By "external sacred space" we mean empirical objects or localities that have become regarded as sacred. A relic of a saint would fall under this definition, as would the "holy ground" that a church rests upon. Those present at Clermont, or who had otherwise heard Urban's call, must have understood that the external sacred spaces of the Holy Land, while seemingly abundant in material and spiritual wealth, were also scarce.

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[74] Sweetenham, 80-1.
[75] Riley-Smith, *The Crusades and the Idea of Crusading,* 35.

There was only one holy Jerusalem, and members of a different religion had occupied it.

It is generally agreed that most violence originates from scarce resources, both real and perceived. According to Hector Avalos, "when religion causes violence, it often does because it has created new scarce resources."[76] In this case, Urban exalted Jerusalem even higher than previously imagined in the minds of Western European Christians. Urban made it clear that there can be only one sacred center of the world, but enemies of God had conquered this center. His propaganda motivated people to fight over Jerusalem as the supreme holy space, which could only be occupied by a chosen people.[77] The reality, of course, is that Jerusalem had been in hands of the Muslims since the seventh century. Even before Urban II, Gregory VII had been concerned about the encroachment of the Muslim Turks on Byzantium's borderlands, but the opportunity to send armed aid did not present itself. The Holy Land certainly was not the land of milk and honey out of the Book of Exodus, or as impossibly rich as Pope Urban II proclaimed. But in each account of the Council of Clermont, Urban II emphasized that Turks had severed Jerusalem from all of Christendom, and were performing sacrilege and atrocities there. Both these fears and fantasies educed around 150,000 Europeans to go on a great pilgrimage to liberate Jerusalem and the Holy Land, with the Franks (i.e. knights mainly from France) playing the prominent part. [78]

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[76] Hector Avalos, *Fighting Words: The Origins of Religious Violence* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005), 18.

[77] Avalos, 185.

[78] Riley-Smith, *The Crusades and the Idea of Crusading*, 11-2.

Urban II wanted only members of the *milites*, the lords and knightly class, to embark on this expedition. An estimated 40,000 knights and mercenaries answered the pope's call. True religious conviction motivated many of these warriors. But most had no claims of lordship in Europe, and thus the Holy Land offered a chance to attain lands and titles.[79] Robert the Monk wrote that women, old, the infirm, or the sick should not go on this pilgrimage. "That is because such pilgrims are more of hindrance that a help, a burden rather than of any practical use."[80] In *Gesta Francorum*, Urban said that a person going on this pilgrimage could attain salvation. Even if he lacked "money, divine mercy will give him enough."[81] This screening process also applied to women. They were cautioned not to embark on the pilgrimage without some kind of male guarantor, such as a brother or husband. Priests or clerics could not go without the permission of their bishop. The main purpose of the clergy was to spread the news of this pilgrimage.[82] Finally, all who went must understand that they were entering a pact with God himself, as a living sacrifice, and must openly display the sign of the cross on their chests or foreheads.[83] Fulcher of Chartres wrote that Pope Urban II claimed, "I, with divine aid, shall strive carefully to root out any crookedness or distortion which might obstruct God's law."[84] Furthermore, those going on the expedition should only leave once

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[79] Madden, *The New Concise History of the Crusades,* 11-13.
[80] Madden, *The New Concise History of the Crusades,* 11-13.
[81] Rosalind Hill, ed., *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), 1.
[82] Sweetenham, 82.
[83] Sweetenham. 81-2.
[84] Peters, *The First Crusade*, 27.

they have sufficient funds.[85] Finally, only secular rulers deemed worthy in the eyes of the church could participate. Certain kings and the Holy Roman Emperor were not invited to go on the crusade.

Urban II used the council to not only preach the crusade, but to also reaffirm the basic tenets of the Gregorian Reforms to assert power of the knightly class. At Clermont, he denounced simony, thus attacking Emperor Henry IV. Urban excommunicated Philip I, the king of France, for his adulterous relationship with Bertrada de Montfort.[86] Urban banned the king from the crusade, too. Furthermore, the pope placed Adhemar, Bishop of Puy, in charge of the expedition, making it clear to the knightly class that the great pilgrimage would be both sponsored and led by the papacy. Adhemar came to personify with the new militant church, a figure like Moses, leading his armies to liberate the Promised Land.[87] Baldric of Dol also made the biblical analogy of the crusaders being like the Chosen People on an exodus. In this version, Urban supposedly said: "With Moses, we shall extend unwearied hand in prayer to Heaven, while you go forth and brandish the sword, like dauntless warriors, against Amalek."[88] Robert the Monk's prologue to his *Historia Iherosolimitana* began by stating that Moses was the greatest of all historians. He further pronounced that the Frankish conquest of Jerusalem ranks third only to Christ's crucifixion and God's creation of the world:

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[85] Peters, *The First Crusade*, 31.
[86] Asbridge, 56-7. Bertrada's son, Fulk V, would later marry Countess Ermengarde. Robert of Arbrissel, as shown later, would council Ermengarde
[87] Sweetenham, 57.
[88] Peters, *The First Crusade*, 32.

> "For what king or prince could subjugate so many towns and castles, fortified by nature, design or human ingenuity, if not *the blessed nations* of the Franks *whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance?"*[89]

Many of those who went on crusade saw themselves as part of God's teleological plan for history, culminating in the reception of Jerusalem, the pinnacle of material sacred space on earth.

These Biblical ideas mingled with eschatological expectations and fantasies. Such that, while the material wealth of Jerusalem lured both knight and commoner to the holy land, so did the prospect of carrying out Biblical prophecy. Peter the Hermit, according to Albert of Aachen and Anna Komnene, had a divine vision that instructed him to raise an army and return to Jerusalem.[90] In the Bible, the signs of the times often included a horde coming out of the east from Gog and Magog commanded by the Antichrist. Earlier Christians had identified this horde with the Huns. This time, the Turks stirred this fantasy.[91] Ordericus Vitalis noted that on April 4, 1095, stars fell like hail from the night sky. "Many thought that the constellation had fallen, and that the scripture was fulfilled, which predicted when and wherefore the stars should fall from heaven."[92]

The crusaders and those who promoted the First Crusade believed they were carrying out God's divine plan. This included Count Emicho who proclaimed himself to be the Last Emperor as he persecuted Jews in the Rhineland. By the eleventh

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[89] Sweetenham, 77; Robert the Monk was referring to Psalms 33:12.

[90] Susan Edgington, trans., *Albert of Aachen, Historia Ierosolimitana: History of the Journey to Jerusalem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7; and Komnene, 275.

[91] Cohn, 31.

[92] Ordericus Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy, Vol. 3.* trans. Thomas Forester (1854. Reprint. New York: AMS Press, 1968), 62.

century, many believed the Last Emperor would appear during a time of Christian tribulation. In this case, this tribulation was interpreted as the Christians in the Holy Land suffering under Muslim rule.[93] Biblical prophecy stated that the Messiah would be a warrior, invincible in battle. In the Book of Revelation, the chosen people in Jerusalem would witness the destruction of the secular kingdoms of earth, and a new holy Jerusalem would descend from Heaven. The chosen would live and reign with "Christ for a thousands years."[94] According to Guibert of Nogent, Urban said that the First Crusaders may do even battle with the Antichrist as foretold in sections of the Book of Daniel:

> "For it is clear that [the] Antichrist is to do battle with not with Jews, not with Gentiles; but according to the etymology of his name, He will attack Christians…. According to Daniel and Jerome, the interpreter of Daniel…. he will sit at Jerusalem in the Temple of the Lord, as though he were God."[95]

We even find further references to Biblical prophecy being fulfilled as the First Crusade progressed. Robert the Monk compared the forces of the Emir of Babylon, who were about to attack Jerusalem, as diabolic servants of the devil as described in Revelation 20.

> "…that writhing serpent and slippery eel… was wretched when he saw the name of Christianity so magnified and the rule of the restored city of Jerusalem so extended. So in his venom he stirred up the Emir of Babylon, Clement (better described as the Demented), against them and along with the whole of the Orient."[96]

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[93] Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, 34; and Cohn, 73.
[94] Cohn, 22-5.
[95] Peters, *The First Crusade*, 35.
[96] Sweetenham, 204; Sweetenham further noted how the Antipope Clement III was compared to being in league with the Antichrist.

Revelation 20 is central to millennial beliefs. Here Satan is bound in a pit for a thousand years, but is loosed upon the world afterward with the hosts of Gog and Magog. This process ends in Revelation 21, when St. John sees in his vision of a heavenly Jerusalem, where God rewards his faithful followers with everlasting life without pain or mourning. Crusaders must have believed, at least in part, that they were fulfilling Biblical prophecy given the amount of millennial references found the accounts of the crusades.

Indeed, the promise of immediate and miraculous total gratification when reaching Jerusalem, as described in the versions of Pope Urban II's speeches, was a cornerstone of millennial fantasies. The pilgrims were helping God's plan unfold on their difficult journey to the Holy Land and overcoming obstacles and peoples there by war.[97] The Biblical prophecies that inspired the warrior-pilgrims carried with it a sense of final justice. In the Augustinian sense, Urban II had the higher authority to proclaim a just war.[98] Robert the Monk claimed that God was fighting for the Crusaders: "Christians should not glory in armies, but in the power of God."[99]

But the stakes were high, and not everybody who set forth on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem would survive. Those who did make it faced the prospect of fighting the hosts of the Antichrist. They had to remain pure, just, and faithful in face of the enemy. For another cornerstone of millennial beliefs, as found in Revelation 21, is

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[97] Arthur P. Mendel, *Vision and Violence* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 6; and Cohn, 22.

[98] Avalos, 41.

[99] Avalos, 164 and 172.

the final punishment of the wicked, polluted, and faithless, would they would face the "second death" of being tossed into the lake of fire.

Sacred Violence over Sacred Space

Jerusalem had become a coveted relic,[100] the epitome of external sacred space. "Jerusalem is the navel of the Earth. It is a land more fruitful than any other, almost another Earthly paradise," Urban II supposedly said at Clermont.[101] This idea was not new in the West. For Christians, Jerusalem was the scene of the greatest of all miracles: the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ. But this was the first time Jerusalem had been used in a widespread spiritual awakening in Western Europe. The propaganda spread by members of the Church made it clear that the city was worth fighting for because "that holy space existed and that it could not be inhabited by everyone."[102] Already in the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville, one of the most widespread works from the early seventh century, Jerusalem had taken on a more apocalyptic meaning. It was the future homeland of the chosen people, "for 'Jerusalem' (*Hierusalem*) is translated as 'vision of peace.' There, when all hostility has been overwhelmed, one will possess peace, which is Christ, by gazing upon him face to face."[103] While chroniclers quoted biblical passages throughout their writings, they quoted the opening lines to Psalm 78 (79) the most:

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[100] Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade,* 21.
[101] Sweetenham, 81.
[102] Avalos, 185.
[103] Barney, Stephen, et al., ed. and trans. *The* Etymologies *of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 173.

> "O God, the nations[104] have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins. They have given the bodies of your servants to the birds of the air for food, the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth. They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them. [105]

The First Crusade was called a pilgrimage, albeit an armed one. But with Isidore's description of Jerusalem and Psalm 78 (79), these armed pilgrims understood their violence they would inflict upon Muslims would be justified. They were participating in a "just war."

Members of the Church, and certainly Urban II, understood St. Augustine's concept of a "just war." That is, Christians should only wage a war when commanded by a just leader, a just authority. Wars should be fought for defensive reasons and never to convert others to Christianity. [106] Furthermore, only a higher authority could determine a just war.[107] An armed pilgrimage to Jerusalem fit all of these criteria. Pope Urban II was the higher authority. The defense of Alexius II's empire fit into the secondary goals of the pilgrimage. Finally, Urban II saw the goal of this pilgrimage as the liberation of Jerusalem not as an attempt to convert Muslims to Christianity. Furthermore, Christians going there would be liberated from their physical and spiritual hardships. "Nay, more, the sorrowful here will be glad there, the poor here will be rich there, and the enemies of the Lord here will be His friends there."[108] The first part of the passage resembles Revelation 21:4, where God wipes

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[104] Or "heathens."
[105] Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade,* 21.
[106] Madden, *The New and Concise History of the Crusades*, 2-4.
[107] Avalos, 41.
[108] Peters, *The First Crusade*, 30-1.

away tears and removes sorrow from men's hearts. Guibert of Nogent, a chronicler of the first crusade, saw this first armed pilgrimage as "a new means of attaining salvation."[109] Those who perished in this task would be rewarded with a martyr's death, according to Robert the Monk.[110] Thus, for those going on this pilgrimage, they would be imitating Christ by becoming involved in a mass sacrifice to achieve a mass apotheosis.[111] Their martyrdom would be a virtual ticket to heaven.[112]

Many of those who promoted and participated in the First Crusade believed, at least in part, that they were part of Christianity's millennial tautology. The logic of this, to them, was self-evident in the rhetoric they heard and the supposedly divine portents they witnessed along the way. They believed that after many trials and tribulations, where God would refrain from direct intervention, they would bring about a "good society." They volunteered, by their moral choice, to fulfill God's creation by doing righteous deeds. They would carry out the transformation and purification of the world, under the pain of apocalyptic punishment and trial.[113] *"Deus Veult! Deus Veult!*—"God wills it! God wills it!" they cried out in the accounts of Urban II's speech at Clermont.[114] Urban II, regardless of the outcome of this armed pilgrimage, had asserted the church's (if not Rome's) place at the head of a theocracy over both secular and spiritual lordships of Christendom. And yet that powerful assertion, and

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[109] Marcus Bull, "The Roots of Lay Enthusiasm for the First Crusade," *The Crusades: The Essential Readings*, ed. Thomas F. Madden (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 174-193.
[110] Sweetenham, 82.
[111] Cohn, 64.
[112] Avalos, 110.
[113] Mendel, 7-11, 33, and 36-7.
[114] Peters, 28; Sweetenham, 81;

the church's own efforts and reform, would lead to some extreme reactions and powerful forms of dissent.

The Crisis of Spiritual Lordship and Heresy

These aspirations of a unified and purified church could never really be reached within the pluralistic construct of Western Christendom. As mentioned before, bishops enjoyed relative autonomy over their domains despite the papacy's claims over their lordship. Strife in the secular realm, of course, further weakened the church and influenced its pluralism. By Peter the Hermit's time, two popes claimed to be the head of the church. Although antipope Clement III was soon seen as a puppet of the Holy Roman Emperor, the establishment of two popes raised complicated issues of authority, legitimacy, and orthodoxy within the church power structures and among the laity. These problems came on top of a renewed anxiety over heresy. One of the unintended consequences emerging from the crisis of spiritual lordship was the rise of the itinerant preachers and concern for the messages they spread.[115]

Since Christianity itself is a proselytizing religion, wandering preachers had been around since nearly its inception. But a new breed of wandering preacher arose in the latter half of the eleventh century. This kind of preacher did not necessarily want to convert people to Christianity. This preacher was, more or less, interested in church reform. Within the context of reform many of these preachers found themselves straddling the line between orthodoxy and heresy. With the church

[115] Wakefield and Evans, 22.

embroiled in the crisis of spiritual lordship, it lacked the means to deal with these errant preachers, regardless of whether or not they were spreading heresy.

The problem of heresy had gnawed at church it's beginning, disrupting the monolithic ideals possessed by its popes and leaders. Over the centuries, heresy varied in its form. Aside for sporadic cases, between the eighth century and the millennium major concerns about heresy seemed to have fallen out of the historical record in Western Europe.[116] By the eleventh century, the church used antiquated terms to describe the supposed heresies it faced, such as Manichaeism. This further confused the reality of heresy and how it function. These stereotypes "blended fantasy and reality"; "the medieval heretic was a reality; the medieval Manichee was a myth."[117] In the third through fifth centuries, Manichaeism had rivaled Christianity for dominance in the Western and Eastern Roman Empires. It, too, was a proselytizing religion and its Persian founder, Mani, had claimed to be an apostle of Jesus. Manichaeism combined the teachings of Zoroastrianism and Christianity. The early Christian church viewed Manichaeism as a heresy because, at the basic level, it was a dualistic religion where good and evil were placed on equal terms, despite its belief in Jesus Christ. Manichaeism made it as far as France by the fifth century before being suppressed by early medieval Christianity. But the church believed that heresy never really went away, but changed into a slightly different form. Thus, when heresies supposedly emerged in Aquitaine around 1018 and in Orleans in 1022, they were called Manichean. In Aquitaine, a chronicler wrote

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[116] Wakefield and Evans, 13-14, and 20.
[117] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 83-85.

that the Manicheans there seemed to dress like monks, and they perhaps had millennial goals. “They were the ambassadors of [sic] Antichrist and caused many to turn away from the faith.”[118] Apparently, the heretics at Orleans did not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus or in certain sacraments such as baptism.[119] The reality was that these early heresies could have been caused by factors besides Manichean, but church officials lacked the ability to label these supposed heresies otherwise.

But the medieval church did understand the core concept of heresy that early church leaders had identified: choice. Isidore, the bishop of Seville (c. 560-636), codified the idea of heresy for early Christians. Isidore wrote that heresy derived from the Greek word for choice, “*haeresis.*” A person who practices heresy uses his own judgment to determine what its best for him when it comes to philosophy, or the practice of “perverse teachings.” This could even lead to leaving the church. Isidore asserts, however, that we (as human beings) do not have the authority to chose or introduce anything based on our judgment or the judgment of others. The apostles of God lacked choice and judgment when they “faithfully bestowed on the world the teaching received from Christ. And if even an angel from heaven preaches otherwise, he will be termed anathema.”[120] Also, church “authority assumed that heresy and rebellions went together.”[121] So when a heresy was reported in a given region, the local bishop often quickly intervened, as most records from the time show.

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[118] Wakefield and Evans, 74-5.
[119] Wakefield and Evans, 74-5 and 78.
[120] Barney, 174.
[121] Lambert, 27.

Strangely enough, however, by the latter half of the century, the goals of heretics and the church often matched,[122] because millennial and reformist energies inspired both orthodoxy and heretics. Obedience, or perceived obedience, to the church mattered, since heresy hinged on whether one chose to follow church doctrine or not. To complicate things further, there can also be a misunderstanding of intent. Both Robert of Arbrissel and Henry of Le Mans preached for the end of corruption within the church. Robert was not considered a heretic, but Henry had to move from one place to another to avoid persecution. The line between orthodoxy and heresy was thin. Obedience to authority was key, but the church relied on an outdated lexicon and lacked the means to effectively combat heresy by the time of the First Crusade.[123] A heretic was often accused of excessive pride for challenging the church, superficial faith, secrecy, lacking the education of a proper church authority, and sexual malfeasance. Heresy was spread by word of mouth, by preaching.

By the eleventh century, itinerant preachers could be easily seen as heretics, even though they might have preached legitimate reform. Their willingness to separate themselves from society to practice a deeper spiritual made them somewhat suspect.[124] Furthermore, these new breed of both monks and hermits rivaled the monopoly of the Black Monks over the apostolic and cenobitic lifestyle. Some even preached without approval from the church. This led to many

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[122] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 15-18.
[123] Moore, *The Formation of Persecuting Society*, 66-7; Lambert, 36-7.
[124] Lambert, 4 and 35. Lambert's statement is true to a certain extent. But the primary sources should not be taken literally as read. That is, the accusations of heresy should be weighed against notions that said accusations could be simple propaganda and hyperbole.

misunderstandings of both intent and practice, compounded with other tensions like those arising from the Investiture Controversy.[125]

Just as with feudalism, lordship, and other topics we have discussed, the meaning of heresy can differ through the eye of each beholder. A heretic, as identified by church doctrine of the period, is a person who comes to his or her own theological explanations (or lack thereof) outside orthodox doctrine. Difficulties arise when determining who is a true heretic and who is simply a reformer. Peter the Hermit did not see himself as a heretic, but he operated outside the will of the church by bringing the poor and destitute with him. Robert of Arbrissel did not see himself as heretic, but faced accusations just shy of heresy because he wanted greater involvement of women in religious matters. Tanchelm of Utrecht probably did not see himself as a heretic, but the clergy of Utrecht did. Edward Peters argued that heresy cannot exist without its relation to orthodoxy, and that orthodoxy cannot exist without authority, and that "it is the quality of authority in orthodoxy that defines and denounces heresy."[126] We argue that heresy and orthodoxy exist on each side of the same coin: the coin of reform; and that authority does indeed define each. Finally, in a basic sense, heresy is simply a threat to authority. A so-called heretic does not rely on the judgment or power of authority, let alone spiritual authority.

With the Gregorian Reforms and the creation of an antipope, the laity had begun to question the traditional forms of spiritual authority. A wandering preacher

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[125] Leyser, 104-5.

[126] Edward Peters, ed., *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press), 14.

could fill this "spiritual vacuum" with dissenting rhetoric.[127] In more extreme cases, an errant preacher warned people that a person's salvation was in danger because the church no longer channeled the proper methods to reach sacred space. Christ's teachings were in the hands of evil or corrupt men.[128] Commoners could and would view the errant preacher as a spiritual leader, even as a prophet or messiah.[129] Indeed, all of the great preachers, such as Peter the Hermit, reached out to the poor, the *pauperes* as defined by their material wealth and their ideal spiritual status.[130] Even genuine reformers were "controversialists" because they emerged during a time when "scant attention had been given to setting a strict and technical boundary between orthodoxy and heresy."[131]

Finally, just like feudal lords, many of these errant preachers refused to submit to church authority. When fellow clergymen criticized Robert of Arbissel's inclusion of women at Fontevraud, he continued to do so anyway. Tanchelm of Utrecht refused to obey the church authorities in the Low Countries. In the mid-twelfth century, Eudo of Brittany and Arnold of Brescia not only refused to submit, but they attacked church authorities in an attempt to purify the church for their followers. Peter the Hermit was not labeled a heretic because he directed his millennial and reformist energies away from the church. Had he led the Popular Crusade against Urban II or even Clement III, the outcome would have been vastly different.

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[127] Cohn, 40-1.
[128] Lambert, 5.
[129] Cohn, 40-1.
[130] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 97-8.
[131] Lambert, 35-7.

Chapter Four:
Lordship on the Eve of the Millennium

The Cycles of Millennial Movements

The crisis of spiritual lordship in the eleventh century followed a cycle. This started with certain groups perceiving the corruption and persecution by another group**.** This led to frenetic action. Most ended with disappointment. We see this with the Peace and Truce of God movements. Even the Gregorian Reforms followed this cycle. The crisis of spiritual lordship emerged and coincided with the crisis of secular lordship, especially with the establishment of an antipope in contrast to the pope. Millennial undercurrents ran throughout society during this process, as did the demand to restore order and justice. Monasteries were at the vanguard of reform, drawing their power and legitimacy from the desire to access sacred space and wealth. Ideally, their adherents did so by living an apostolic life that imitated Jesus' poverty (though the reality could be otherwise), and by promoting their relics to pilgrims. This, in turn, brought many monasteries wealth. Still, there was always the concern that the church had become too corrupt by its wealth and the influence of secular power. The crisis of secular and spiritual lordship deepened as the eleventh century progressed in the face of reforms. With the church's spiritual lordship held in

question, the laity and especially the poor at times had to turn to another kind of lordship for spiritual answers and secular needs: millennial lordship.

The cycle of millennial lordships followed a general pattern, identifiable in Peter the Hermit and in other errant preachers. The millennial lord preached for spiritual reform in light of the breakdown in the traditional forms of lordship. The millennial lord would also start his movement by identifying and speaking against a source of corruption, persecution, or both. Excited by this revelation, enthusiastic followers would gather around the millennial lord, forming a millennial movement. In turn, he would led them into spiritual warfare with the promise of gaining both material wealth and spiritual wealth, by gaining access to sacred space. In turn, those proclaiming orthodoxy would resist and condemn the efforts of a millennial movement using a variety of methods. At a certain point, the millennial movement would experience the Apocalypse—the revelation—that its desire for reform had little or no meaningful effect on the world. This could also coincide with the death of its leader. But the impact of the millennial movement would still be felt within the society that produced it, becoming an example and inspiration for future popular millennial movements. Indeed, the millennial popular movements of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries set the precedents for later movements, both orthodox and heretical.

Corruption and Persecution

Millennial spiritual lordship straddled the boundaries of orthodoxy and heresy, but those successful at it would have had many followers and much wealth. These

men claimed to be true servants of Christ, and their followers revered them as such, defending them from opponents and at times treating their living bodies like relics. These itinerant preachers used a number of methods to acquire their spiritual lordships. Most of these methods focused on their skills of oration and personal charisma to denounce the church's corruption. But at times their rhetoric centered on the persecution of true believers.

Peter the Hermit's own millennial movement arose from the stories of persecution by Muslims against Christians in the Holy Land and Jerusalem. Albert of Aachen and other chroniclers wrote that Peter had made pilgrimage to Jerusalem sometime before 1095. Once there, Peter supposedly found that holy places had been corrupted and defied. Churches were used as stables. He asked the patriarch of Jerusalem why he had allowed Christians in the city to be physically abused and "holy pilgrims robbed by excessive fees and distressed by the many violent acts of the infidels."[132] Anna Komnene wrote that Peter had suffered ill treatment from the Turks as he left the Holy Sepulcher.[133] In both accounts, Peter witnessed a divine vision, which ordered him to restore justice for the Christians of the Jerusalem. Albert of Aachen's account, known for its more narrative flare, made a vow to the Patriarch of Jerusalem:

> "'Reverend father, I have learnt enough…. Because of this, for the love of God and for your liberation, and for the cleansing of the holy places, with God beside me and as long as life is vouchsafed to me, I shall return and seek out first of all the pope, then all the leaders of Christian peoples, kings, dukes, counts, and those holding chief places in the kingdom, and I

[132] Edgington, 5.
[133] Anna Komnene, 275.

> shall make know to them all the wretchedness of your servitude and the unendurable nature of your difficulties.'"[134]

Albert of Aachen also wrote that Peter the Hermit had earlier met Pope Urban II himself in Rome, and told him of the atrocities that Christians faced in Jerusalem. Thus Peter was credited for initiating the crusade.[135] According to William of Tyre, after Peter returned from the Holy Land, he wandered all over Italy before crossing the Alps into France. He was the legitimate herald of Pope Urban II's message.[136] Other sources do not account for this. In whatever the case, by the end of 1095, Peter began to preach Pope Urban II's call for armed pilgrimage to Jerusalem.[137] Soon Peter the Hermit had attained his own millennial spiritual lordship over thousands of followers. Fulcher of Chartres placed Peter among the list of chief pilgrims and secular rulers who departed for Jerusalem by the pope's command.[138] Albert of Aachen considered Peter's multiethnic army to be "as innumerable as the sands of the sea."[139]

Yet Peter the Hermit had much in common with men who ended their days as declared heretics. His Popular Crusade, just like the other popular movements of the time, began with a choice. This choice centered on restoring justice in the world. For the Popular and the First Crusade, the meant the expulsion of the Muslims occupying the Holy Land and vengeance for their suspected ill treatment of

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[134] Edgington, 5.
[135] Edgington, 7.
[136] Peters, *The First Crusade,* 87.
[137] Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade,* 159. Riley-Smith's chronological timeline for the First Crusade form our basis for the sequence of events in dealing with Peter the Hermit.
[138] Peters, *The First Crusade*, 57-8.
[139] Edgington, 13. This is a reference to 2 Samuel 17:11.

Christians there. Also like other movements, it represented an attempt to achieve millennial lordship.

Indeed, Peter the Hermit and those like him radiated a supernatural aura to those who listened to them. And people listened because these men offered something beyond the miseries of the material world. With their oratory skills, they promised the wealth of sacred spaces to their followers. These men also denounced the traditional roles of the church or even defied the wishes of church officials.

Robert of Arbrissel openly denounced the practice of simony both in public and private. In his letter and sermon to Ermengarde, the Countess of Brittany, he warned her that she kept the company of adulterous princes and clergy, bishops, abbots and priests who practiced simony. His condemnation of those within the church was quite severe. "Many clerics are hypocrites," he wrote. "Monks and hermits, in order to please men, pretend to make long prayers that they might be seen by men."[140] Furthermore, Robert seemed to have disagreed with the traditional rule of St. Benedict. The statutes Robert of Arbrissel left for his followers were stricter than rules for Benedictine monks. Robert forbade nuns and "religious brothers" (Robert never called the men "monks") from eating meat, even when ill. Furthermore, silence was to be kept at all times except when dealing with external business. Not even forms of sign languages, acceptable in other orders, could be

[140] Venarde, xxvi, 75 and 78. Eremgarde's husband, whom she wanted to leave, Count Fulk V of Anjou, would later become the King of Jerusalem 1109. Fulk was also one of Robert's benefactors.

used.[141] Robert wanted his followers to led a more pure spiritual life synchronous, more or less, with church doctrine, despite his inclusion of women.

Others wanted reform by actively preaching against the clergy in a give region. Ramihrdus had already gathered number of followers among the people in the nearby villages around Cambrai by the time the local bishop had heard of his activities. The bishop brought Ramihrdus to his court for questioning. When the bishop ordered him to partake in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, "he refused, asserting that he would take it from not of the abbots or priests, not even from the bishop himself, because they were all deeply involved in the crime of simony or other such greedy practice."[142]

In the early twelfth century, Tanchelm of Utrecht found himself in a similar situation. Scholars have agreed that Tanchelm was probably preaching the Gregorian Reforms, but ended up being accused of heresy because he was a threat to the established clergy in the Flanders and the Low Countries. His actions can even be linked to the ongoing Investiture Controversy. He even had traveled to Rome in 1112-1113 with business in dealing with taking certain regions away from the diocese of Utrecht and giving them to a bishop under the influence of King Louis VI of France. This has been seen as a move against the Holy Roman Emperor at that time, Henry V, as part of the ongoing Investiture Controversy. When the pope denied this request, Tanchelm returned to Flanders to actively preach against the clergy of Utrecht. His preaching alarmed the clergy there so much that he

[141] Venarde, 85 and 143.
[142] Wakefield and Evans, 96.

beseeched the archbishop of Cologne for help.[143] One opponent no doubt exaggerated Tanchelm's claims. "For, puffed up by the spirit of pride, which is the root of every heresy and apostasy, he declared that the pope was naught, archbishops naught, bishops naught, priests and clerics naught."[144] Tanchelm must have shaken the spiritual lordship of the clergy under the influence of the Holy Roman Emperor to get this kind of reaction. Henry Le Man's powers of oration were so potent that the clergy of Le Mans wept at his feet. He soon turned the crowd against clergy, however, who threatened to torture and treat them like heathens.[145]

Still others, like Peter the Hermit, aroused the common person to use violence against the clergy who they deemed as corrupt. Examples include Eudo of Brittany and, perhaps even more extreme, Arnold of Brescia. In the mid-1140s, Eudo attacked churches and monasteries with his followers, but is no evidence that he wanted true reform. Indeed, supposedly the council at Rheims found his actions laughable because he could not speak or read proper Latin. But, as both one anonymous chronicler and William of Newburgh wrote, Eudo was filled with a "diabolic spirit."[146] Arnold of Brescia began preaching that the true priesthood lay within poverty and proselytizing. While his critics may have disagreed with these ideas, they were appalled at the violence he churned among the common laity against the clergy. Arnold's career began in Rome, as the abbot of Brescia who had come to dispute the actions of his own bishop. With his oration, he accumulated a

[143] Wakefield and Evans, 96-7.
[144] Wakefield and Evans, 98.
[145] Wakefield and Evans, 110.
[146] Wakefield and Evans, 141-3.

number of followers within Rome itself to turn against the pope, who eventually had him expelled from both Rome and Italy. But this, apparently, did not stop Arnold from continuing his preaching. “Nevertheless,” one chronicler wrote, “he was reputed to be factious and a leader of schism, who wherever he lived prevented the citizens from being at peace with the clergy.”[147] In the early 1150s Arnold returned to Rome after the death of Pope Innocent II and began a rebellion there, supposedly based around restoring the Republic of Rome of from antiquity, as described by another chronicler:

> “Moreover, the menace of this baneful doctrine began to grow so strong that not only were the houses and splendid palaces of Roman nobles and cardinals destroyed, but even the reverend persons of some of the cardinals were shamefully treated by the infuriated populace, and several were wounded.”[148]

The rebellion was somewhat short lived. Once again Arnold was once expelled from Rome. He made it as far as Tuscany before he was captured and executed.

Regardless of the outcome of each millennial lord, their movements were based on influencing the common laity. They led *popular* movements, after all, to reform certain aspects of the world, especially the church, into their liking. While the lordship they acquired (and the violence they, at times, inspired) is apparent in the historical record, their appeal to the common person might be less so.

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[147] Wakefield and Evans, 147.
[148] Wakefield and Evans, 150.

Empowerment

Millennial lords had to empower their followers. Otherwise they would have been merely ranting men wandering from one village to the next, absent from history. At least, they had to give the perception that they had something to offer to potential followers. While these errant and millennial preachers certainly had influence with some members of the knightly class and the church, they primarily drew their power from commoners. The peasant existed at the bottom of the feudal social hierarchy. Not all peasants were created equal, of course. Many were serfs. Some were freemen with lands of their own. But the population increase of the eleventh century also increased the number of itinerant poor on the brink of starvation. Around 1100 the lowest classes, unlike monks, did not have to imitate the so-called poverty of Christ. Norman Cohn wrote: “The poverty of these people was anything but voluntary, their lot was extreme and relentless insecurity, and their millenarianism was violent, anarchic, and truly revolutionary.”[149] An itinerant preacher could attain millennial lordship by appealing to poor, the *pauperes*, and others who felt somehow disenfranchised, persecuted by the feudal system, believed that feudal society was on the brink of collapse, or all three. Millennial lords related to the commoners by their dress and diet, their powers of oration, and their status as living relics. Their followers became empowered by their supposed sacred space, and the material and spiritual wealth it offered. Millennial lords, unlike the church, also included women in their movements, at times in prominent positions.

[149] Cohn, 16.

Many also were seen as champions of order, making peace where there was discord.

First and foremost, however, the itinerant preacher who sought millennial lordship need to use their powers of speech to draw large throngs of people to him. According to Albert of Aachen, Peter the Hermit was a "preacher of the utmost persuasiveness and oratory" who called to "all of the common people, as many sinful as pious men, adulterers, murders, thieves, robber: that is to say every sort of people of the Christian faith, indeed even the female sex, led by repentance…" to his Popular Crusade.[150] Guibert of Nugent, who claimed that he had seen Peter preach to the multitudes, stated that Peter was so successful that the poor obeyed him "as a master," and that "his holiness was lauded so highly, that no one within my memory has been held in such honor."[151] Baldric of Dol wrote that Robert of Arbrissel "gave off something like a perfume of divine expressiveness, for few were his equal in eloquence."[152] Baldric also stated that God worked his will through Robert of Arbrissel, by giving Robert a powerful voice that overcame ignorance and taught virtues.[153] Initially, Tanchelm had spread his message in secret. His first followers were poor fishermen. But as the numbers of his followers grew, he started to preach on rooftops and open fields to multitudes of people. He preached to the "untutored" or people who were already predisposed to "those things which he knew would

[150] Edgington, 5.
[151] Peters, *The First Crusade*, 103.
[152] Venarde, 12-3.
[153] Venarde, 9.

please."[154] Henry Le Man's powers of oration were so potent that the clergy of Le Mans wept at his feet. But he soon turned the crowd against the clergy, however, who threatened to torture and treat the clergy like heathens.[155]

These preachers understood that they had to distinguish themselves from the opposition in the eyes their followers. While they spoke against corrupt clergy, they themselves had to be pure with access to legitimate sacred space. For Peter the Hermit, the opposition was easily identifiable as the Muslims in occupation of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Even after Henry of Le Mans was banished from Le Mans, pronounced a heretic by Pope Innocent II, his spiritual lordship did not end, he still continued his preaching throughout France.[156] Moreover, after his departure the village of Saint-Calais, his followers in Le Mans remained loyal to him. When the bishop of Le Mans returned to the city from his journey to Rome, a mob confronted him. They supposedly cried out: "We have a father, we have a pontiff, we have an advocate who surpasses you in authority; he exceeds you in probity and knowledge. The wicked clergy, your clergy, oppose him."[157] Tanchelm of Utrecht himself was basically accused of Donatism, the ancient heresy that proclaimed that all sacraments, past or present, performed by a priest or bishop who was excommunicated null and void. Given that Tanchelm tried to promote the Gregorian Reforms, no doubt did he viewed the clergy of Utrecht as corrupted by simony and

[154] Wakefield and Evans, 98-99.
[155] Wakefield and Evans, 110.
[156] Wakefield and Evans, 115.
[157] Wakefield and Evans, 113.

therefore unworthy of dispensing the sacraments.[158] Norman Cohn concluded that Tanchelm actually held real dominion over a number of followers in a large area of the Low Countries.[159] That is, many people believed that Tanchelm's millennial lordship surpassed that of regular secular and spiritual lords.

The followers of these men must have admired them because they actually the apostolic life that many of the church professed but did not practice. Peter's diet was sparse, perhaps keeping with certain Benedictine traditions. Robert the Monk said Peter the Hermit did not meat or bread, but did enjoy wine (alluding to perhaps Peter's alcoholism/incontinence).[160] Guibert of Nogent added that he also ate fish.[161] Most of the accounts Peter label him dressed like a monk. Furthermore, both Robert of Arbrissel and Peter (just like Christ himself) also had withdrawn from society for a time. Baldric of Dol stated that Robert had a deep internal spiritual conflict, but in the end Robert pledged his life as a sacrifice to God. After Robert emerged from the wilderness, he desired to reform both the church and himself. Baldric also said that Robert of Arbrissel met Pope Urban II while the pontiff promoted the expedition to the Holy Land. They had met in Angers, where Urban II asked Robert to help consecrate a new church there. The pope, however, had already heard of Robert's relatively unorthodox preaching, and insisted that the Robert be obedient to the church as "God's word-scatterer."[162]

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[158] Wakefield and Evans, 98-9.
[159] Cohn, 49-1.
[160] Sweetenham, 83.
[161] Peters, *The First Crusade*, 103.
[162] Peters, *The First Crusade*, 103.

In some cases, chroniclers saw these itinerant preachers as peacemakers and mediators. But these were usually the exception, as demonstrated with Robert of Arbrissel and Peter the Hermit. Before his death, Robert of Arbrissel mediated disputes among the nobles in Chartres and then settled the ransom of William of Nevers at Castle Blois. Even as Robert's health grew worse he "took pains to distribute the salvific words of preaching to the people around him."[163] According to Guibert of Nogent, Peter the Hermit…

> "By his wonderful authority he restored everywhere peace and concord, in place of discord. For in whatever he did or said it seemed as if there was something divine, especially when the hairs were snatched from his mule for relics. We do not report this is true, but for the common people who love novelties."[164]

The Age of Lordship and the crisis of spiritual lordship no doubt created a sense of discord in the world for the average person. If an itinerant preacher could settle disputes between feuding nobles, this could mean relative peace and stability for a community. The peasantry would have no doubt supported such efforts. Restoring peace, if only briefly, to given region during this time could have been viewed as miraculous. But also we see with Peter the Hermit's example that these millennial preachers where also viewed as part divine. The common people gained directed access to sacred space by taking relics from them.

For many common people, these millennial lords were living and breathing relics, given the aura of their personalities. Their followers treated them as such. In addition to Peter's example, the followers of Tanchelm supposedly purchased his

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[163] Venarde, 7.
[164] Peters, *The First Crusade,* 103.

bathwater “to the most foolish persons, to be drunk as a blessing, as a sacrament that would most sacredly and efficaciously conduce to health of body and salvation of the soul.”[165] Followers of Henry of Le Mans supposedly claimed that he had the power, bestowed by God, to bless people and know their sins “by only scanning their faces.”[166] The sacredness of a millennial lord could even surpass his death. Followers of Ramihrdus of Cambrai gathered his bones and ashes after he had been burned as a heretic.[167]

Even Robert of Arbrissel understood the value of his own body, even after death. At his own deathbed, he requested to a bishop that his body be treated as a sacred treasure. The bishop agreed. Robert then demanded to be buried at Fontevraud. Andreas, one of Robert’s followers wrote that Robert had said, “If I am buried there, the living will love the place more and those the Devil holds fast in disobedience will come to seek mercy.”[168]

Robert of Arbrissel, along with other millennial lords, also reached out to include women in their followings. But the presence of women within these movements often sparked controversy. Members of the clergy, who saw themselves as orthodox, questioned and criticized movements that contained women. The inclusion of women at the very least could signify the illegitimacy of the preacher and his movement. Even worse, the millennial lord could be accused of sexual deviancy, or compromising his priestly or monastic vows of celibacy. At the furthest extreme,

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[165] Wakefield and Evans, 99.
[166] Wakefield and Evans, 109.
[167] Wakefield and Evans, 96.
[168] Venarde, 45-6.

the millennial lord's inclusion and supposedly abuse of women could make him seem like a heretic, because their deviant sexual acts were a manifestation of their supposed spiritual deviancy and pollution. They had crossed the boundary between purity and danger. They had possibly brought women of their orthodox and submissive role into either positions power or worse, into sexual impurity.[169]

Chroniclers often remarked out Peter the Hermit including women in his Popular Crusade. This is important. Peter's story usually appears just after Pope Urban II's speech at Clermont where, as mentioned in the last chapter, he forbade women to go the crusade. But chroniclers seemed to approve, for the most part, Peter's actions toward women. Albert of Aachen said that Peter the Hermit preached even to women, who flocked to him out of desire for repentance.[170] Peter, according to Guibert of Nogent, "restored prostitutes to their husbands with gifts."[171] Peter's example might show that his movement might have been illegitimate because it included women, which is why it ended in failure according to certain critics. But the evidence of this is scant, if it exists at all.

With Ramihrdus of Cambrai's example, it was his supposed message that condemned him as a heretic, not necessarily his inclusion of women. Ramihrdus had "gathered around him many disciples and a very numerous groups of both sexes who were in agreement with him."[172] The bishop had him burned, not necessarily because women were attracted to his message, but because of his heretical

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[169] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 94-5.
[170] Edgington, 4-5.
[171] Peters, *The First Crusade*, 103.
[172] Wakefield and Evans, 96.

message itself, and his refusal to partake in the sacraments offered to him. Weavers, however, supposedly continue to adhere to his teachings after his death.[173]

Critics of Tanchelm of Utrecht and Henry of Le Mans, however, saw that women were an integral part of their supposed heresy. Tanchelm was accused of marrying a statue of the Virgin Mary. He ordered his followers to contribute funds for his betrothal feast with the statue. "The women cast in earrings and necklaces and thus, with outrageous sacrilege, he collected and enormous sum of money."[174] Henry had supposedly ordered his unchaste female followers to burn their garments. "While they behaved as the charlatan suggested, the fellow admired the beautiful features of individual women, how one surpassed the other in whiteness, while another was more attractive for plumpness of body."[175] Tanchelm received other accusations concerning his association with women, which we discuss in the section below on spiritual warfare.

When studying these accounts, however, one should not take these criticisms literally. Perhaps some sexual deviancy occurred, as described by the writers of these account who viewed themselves as orthodox. But one must keep in mind these wandering preachers disrupted the spiritual and material wealth in a given region. They were a threat to established traditional power structures, even if they had papal sanction. Their opponents would probably do anything or say anything to tarnish the reputations of these men, especially if these preachers came from a

[173] Wakefield and Evans, 95-6 and 671.
[174] Wakefield and Evans, 99.
[175] Wakefield and Evans, 112.

clerical or monastic background (which they often did). Still, such accounts can shed some light into how women became part of these popular and millennial movements.

When compared the examples above, Robert of Arbrissel is a prime example of the ambiguity between reformation and heresy when it comes to his female followers. Robert in particular, received criticism for his allowance of syneisactism, the practice of allowing men and women to live together or interact under the pretense of holiness, in his community at Fontevraud. This custom actually was not new. Early Christians practiced this custom. The point of syneisactism was to heighten the awareness of the differences between the sexes. But each group would suppress their attraction to the opposite sex, thus avoiding even the thought of copulation.[176]

He even invested women into leadership positions of his community. On his deathbed he gave Petronilla, the first Abbess of Fontevraud, the power to rule the monastery and its daughter houses. Both nuns and "religious brothers… are to revere her as their spiritual mother," Robert declared in his final statutes given to Petronilla.[177] Petronilla even had the right to distribute property. At Fontevraud, the men could not accept any form of tithes or property, since Robert deemed that such business would distract the men from their religious duty and dependence on the nuns.[178]

Others furiously questioned Robert's motives. Marbode of Rennes, who, as we shall see in the next section, fell just short of accusing Robert of having sexual

[176] Venarde, 125-6.
[177] Venarde, 85.
[178] Venarde, 144-5.

designs for these women. Even Marbode's accusations, just like those made against Tanchelm of Utrecht and Henry of Le Mans, can be called into question. Marbode was a bishop who may have been deflecting criticism against himself by attacking Robert. It turns out that Marbode himself had written a number of lewd poems on sexual topics.[179]

Robert and his fellow itinerant preachers empowered their followers with their offers of material and spiritual wealth. But their actions threatened to disempower traditional spiritual authorities that viewed themselves as orthodox. These authorities would not give up their power without a struggle. They found means to resist and condemn the actions of the errant preacher who sought millennial lordship.

Spiritual Warfare

Millennial and apocalyptic movements justified their existence by the notion that a final war between good and evil would soon be fought. Obviously, not all agreed with this premise. The millennial lords of these movements attempted to rival and eclipse orthodox secular and spiritual authorities. They used a variety of weapons in their arsenal to criticize and violently condemn orthodox secular and spiritual leaders. Inevitably, the forces of orthodoxy respond with similar tactics. Each side perceived itself to represent sacred ideas, fighting to purge the profane. Millennial spiritual lords and their movements often faced stiff resistance. This resistance could take many forms. Authorities could themselves, or have others, preach against the message of the errant preacher. Bishops often had the offending

[179] Venarde, 91.

preacher captured by secular authorities and then questioned, even killed. Perhaps most importantly, much of the criticism levied against the errant millennial lord often contained millennial terminology and tones.

As we have seen, some of the criticism was fairly harmless. Some wrote of Robert of Arbrissel with contempt, others with praise for being a great reformer. Robert the Monk does not hesitate to point out Peter the Hermit's shortcomings, such as his fondness for wine and incontinence. He makes it clear that Peter's movement was not part of the regular crusade. Peter's faulty leadership invited the apostate Rainald assume leadership over a contingent of Peter's followers just after they crossed into Anatolia. Rainald had them plunder Christian churches to steal their riches. Robert the Monk attributes the success of the First Crusade to God's favor via the authority and legitimacy of the pope, rather than Peter the Hermit.[180]

Other preachers were criticized for their dress and appearance. Henry of Le Mans may have worn his hair cropped, let his beard grow long, and walked barefoot even in winter, in the manner of a religiously devout hermit, but according to the same account, this was all a deception.[181] He was also described in another source as "pseudohermit" or a wolf in sheep's clothing.[182] As seen below, Marbode of Rennes disparaged Robert of Arbrissel's dress alongside Robert's inclusion of women.

Criticism, however, became more vicious the more a millennial lord was seen as a heretic. Critics of Tanchelm of Utrecht said that he acquired spiritual lordship

[180] Sweetenham, 57 and 85-6.
[181] Wakefield and Evans, 108.
[182] Wakefield and Evans, 114.

over harlots, and some of his followers seem to have imitated his example. Opponents also accused Tanchelm of sexual misconduct, preaching to harlots whose "intimacies" he enjoyed in private. Tanchelm supposedly betrothed himself to a statue of the Virgin Mary and demanded his followers give offerings. Women were said to have tossed large amounts of jewelry into the chest he provided. One of Tanchelm's followers, a blacksmith named Manasses, followed Tanchelm's example. He formed his own group where twelve men would represent the apostles and one lone woman represented the Virgin Mary. They allegedly had sex with her as some kind of ritual to confirm their brotherhood.[183]

Yet even one like Robert of Arbrissel, who generally was not seen as a heretic, received harsh words. Marbode of Rennes, in his letter to Robert of Arbrissel, questioned him for disparaging members of the clergy to the common laity. Often, those being slandered were absent. "It seems to give license for unlettered listeners to sin when you place before them as bad examples of their betters, by whose authority they could protect themselves."[184]

Marbode of Rennes personally criticized Robert of Arbrissel in a letter for no longer wearing the proper garments of a monk. He accused Robert for simply making a spectacle out of himself and violating cultural norms by wearing a hair shirt, walking barefoot, and having a long beard. Marbode drove the point home to

[183] Wakefield and Evans, 98-100.
[184] Venarde, 97.

Robert: "you lack only a club to complete the outfit of a lunatic."[185] He attacked Robert of Arbrissel of his inclusion of women at Fontevraud:

> "You deign to join women not only at a common table but also by night in a common bed—or it is so reported… also you keep not a small number of women in different places and regions, in hospices and lodgings, women intermingled with men (not with impunity), on the pretext that you have assigned to them to the care of the poor and pilgrims. How dangerous is this practice the wailing of babies, to not put too fine a point on it, has betrayed."[186]

Marbode fell just short of an outright condemnation of Robert in that he admitted that the worst sexual allegations against him were only rumor. Other critics were not so restrained.

Opponents of Henry of Le Mans, lashed out more viciously, graphically, pointing out sexual misconduct. According to one account, Henry pandered to both sexes, who "caressed his feet, his buttocks, his groin, with tender hands" and claimed that they had never touched a man of such power.[187] Later, he restored prostitutes by having them burn their garments and their hair, all while naked. He forbade dowries from wife to husband, and was not concerned if the chaste married the unchaste. He did, however, replace the garments the former prostitutes burned. These cheap "four-shilling" clothes, as one chronicler noted, barely covered the nakedness of the prostitutes. This practice actually worked for a time as these

[185] Venarde, 96-7.
[186] Venarde, 93.
[187] Wakefield and Evans, 109.

former prostitutes married their new husbands. But in the end, so the critics claimed, many of these women relapsed into their old habits.[188]

Even Bernard of Clairvaux, the great reformer from the Cistercian Order of Monks, was called upon to deal with the spreading heresy of Henry of Le Mans. Bernard denounced Henry as a wolf in sheep's clothing who deceived his followers with false prophecies. But Bernard was also shocked to hear that even married women applauded Henry's preaching. He also traveled to Toulouse to preach against Henry's false doctrines. He, too, just like other itinerant preachers before him, was met with throngs of people. Bernard seemed to have access to sacred space, since he perform a number of miraculous works, such as winning over the hearts and minds of heretics, and healing sickness in others. Sometime later, Bernard also gave a sermon against heresy in general, and even condemned Arnold of Brescia at one point.[189]

Critics used millennial words and tones when attacking these men. They saw the itinerant preacher as a threat to the holy order of the church with their deceptions. One critic of Tanchelm of Utrecht considered him to be a precursor to the Antichrist. "He put on the pomp of a monarch going out to harangue the people, attended by a retinue who bore banner and sword before him as though he went forth to speak amidst royal trappings."[190] Another account also spoke of his "rich and gilded garments" and how he persuaded nearly three thousand armed men to do his

[188] Wakefield and Evans, 111-2
[189] Wakefield and Evans, 125-6.
[190] Wakefield and Evans, 98.

bidding.[191] He warned people to stop taking communion and to cease tithing to the church.[192] Henry of Le Mans seemed to have demonic aid as he made clerics kneel before him. “It was as if legions of demons were all making their noise in one blast through his mouth.”[193] Eberwin, the Abbot of a monastery of Steinfield, used apocalyptic tone in his appeal to Bernard of Clairvaux to come to Cologne and deal with the spreading heresy there. He was incredibly explicit in linking heresy as a symptom of the approach of the end of the world, citing the Apostle Paul (John 2:10): “the Spirit manifestly saith that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits or error and doctrines of devils.”[194] Eberwin further pressed his point home, calling Bernard to stand against heresy, referencing both Revelation 20:9 and Isaiah 13:6:

> “It is now tome for you do to draw from the fifth waterpot and publicly stand forth against the new heretics who everywhere in almost all churches boil up from the pit of hell as though already their prince were about to be loosed and the day of the Lord were at hand.”[195]

Bernard of Clairvaux’s reply was tamer in tone. He said that heretics were like foxes, quick to deceive but quicker to flee into darkness when the truth of the church was made clear. He quoted Isaiah 60:8, at one point, referencing that prophecy where the Lord’s light will shine over an endarkened world. The faithful will “fly like a cloud” toward this light.[196] The council who questioned Eudo of Brittany saw him, somewhat

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[191] Wakefield and Evans, 101
[192] Wakefield and Evans, 98.
[193] Wakefield and Evans, 110.
[194] Wakefield and Evans, 128 and 681
[195] Wakefield and Evans, 128.
[196] Wakefield and Evans, 132-8.

jokingly, as an illiterate false messiah of the Apocalypse. A chronicler said that Eudo referred to himself as "Eon," confusing this name with the Latin pronoun for Jesus or God, *eum.* "'I am Eon, who shall come to judge the quick and the dead.'"[197]

Still, despite this rhetoric, followers of millennial lords would at times defend their messiah-like leaders from opposition. For example, when three clergymen had tried to debate Henry of Le Mans, they were almost killed. Henry's mob pelted them with mud and filth before violently attacking them. The clergymen survived because the crowd had not completely surrounded them; they were able to flee to the protection of the local count.[198]

Yet despite such defense and loyalty these millennial preachers inspired, most errant preachers ultimately failed at one point. Henry of Le Mans wandered for decades because his movements kept collapsing. Even Robert of Arbrissel, who died peacefully at his deathbed, had one movement fall apart before founding Fontevraud. Peter the Hermit, who escaped major opposition because he directed his movement away from Europe, ultimately saw its collapse… its "apocalypse."

Apocalypse

Peter the Hermit, who seemed like a general in command of his army,[199] reached Constantinople on August 1, 1096. Walter Sansavoir had already arrived in the city as Peter's herald. They crossed the Bosporus around August 7, after

[197] Wakefield and Evans, 143-5.
[198] Wakefield and Evans, 110.
[199] Peters, *The First Crusade*, 100-5.

negotiating with Alexius I for passage and provisions. Little did Peter know that his millennial lordship would be over by September's end.

In fact, it was already crumbling. Peter's army had already met stiff resistance in Bulgaria, where the Duke Nichita declared them to be false Christians, according to Albert Aachen, an attacked them. Nichita and other leaders had been determined to defend against the potential depredations of Peter's army. Indeed, other contingents had already been pillaging their way through Eastern Europe on the way to Constantinople. Duke Nichita's forces slew a number of Peter's followers, forcing the rest to scatter, and even captured Peter's wagon filled with "countless gold and silver."[200] It took Peter sometime to reassemble this host with the help of his chief lieutenants, such as Walter Sansavoir. Even when they reached Constantinople, division amid Peter's force became even more apparent. Certain German and Italian leaders within the host split from Peter once on the other side of the Bosporus. His control over his own French and German forces seemed tenuous at best. The realities of the armed pilgrimage had set in. Not even Peter's powers of oration could unite them. Once separated, they were easy prey for the Muslims to pick them off one by one. Yet Peter the Hermit had slipped away.[201] By September 29, the Turks had destroyed all the different forces that were part of the Popular Crusade. Peter the Hermit had fled back to Constantinople. Apparently, the Emperor Alexius rejoicing at his defeat.[202] Peter's millennial spiritual lordship was over.

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[200] Edgington, 21-25.
[201] Sweetenham, 87; and Hill, 4.
[202] Sweetenham, 7.

In nearly every millennial and apocalyptic movement there comes a point where the utopian fantasy cannot be maintained for all members. This is the moment of apocalypse, where a "veil is lifted" and the revelation is clearly experience: the world is not ending, and the realities of their situation may very well be overwhelming. For Peter the Hermit, this was after his armies reached Constantinople. His mass movement, once under his influence, had gone beyond his control and ended in destruction. The death of a leader may signify this moment, but in Peter's case it did not. In many cases, empirical realities and the resistance of other authorities were enough to dispel the apocalyptic fantasies of these movements.

Even after the crumbling of their initial movements some leaders, like Peter the Hermit and Robert of Arbrissel, managed to maintain a certain status of spiritual lordship. Robert of Arbrissel established his first community at La Roe, but he became disappointed with his results, and moved on to found Fontevraud. Peter, even after his followers were massacred, attained a priestly role with the main crusading armies. He served as part of the envoy that parleyed with Kerbogha during the Siege of Antioch. Reportedly, when Kerbogha made demand to the crusaders, Peter responded that Kerbogha and his people were the real invaders, since Peter the Apostle had converted the Holy Land to Christianity over a thousand years before by preaching.[203] According to Albert of Aachen, during the siege of Jerusalem, the poor and destitute of the army that occupied Jerusalem went to see a hermit residing on the Mount of Olives for advice about the lack of water. The hermit

[203] Hill, 66-7.

recommended a three day fast. After the fast, Peter the Hermit and another cleric, Arnulf of Chocques, preached a sermon to all of the pilgrims to end the dissension among them.[204] Before the Battle of Ascalon, Peter and another priest named Arnulf blessed the crusaders after a massive feast.[205]

For other leaders, the moment of disappointment coincided with their violent end. Ramihrdus was burned as a heretic. A priest came up from behind Tanchelm and bashed in his head. Henry of Le Mans wandered the feudal heartlands for decades, witnessing one movement crumble after another, before he died imprisoned in 1246. Although in each case, their movements linger on for a time, the records indicated that these had lost their earlier empowerment under their leaders. Robert of Arbrissel was the most successful with the founding of Fontevraud and the establishment of many daughter monasteries.

Jay Rubenstein argues that the First Crusade itself completed an apocalyptic cycle. Those who had participated in it had felt that they had truly witnessed the Apocalypse come and go. In reality, the First Crusade opened the West to nearly two hundred years of warfare for control of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.[206] Most immediately it had laid the groundwork for the second crusade, almost forty-five years later. The Apocalypse had been postponed once again. The world had moved on.

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[204] Edgington, 413-15.
[205] Edgington, 459.
[206] Rubenstein, 319-25.

The World Moves On

The crisis of spiritual and secular lordship continued to spin the apocalyptic web within medieval society and culture even after the failure of these movements and the preachers who led them. Those becoming errant preachers found themselves caught in a web of almost dualistic beliefs: heresy versus orthodoxy, legitimacy versus illegitimacy, authority versus rebellion, purity versus corruption, the secular versus the spiritual, spiritual reformation versus spiritual stagnation, and finally the millennial and apocalyptic tradition of a final battle between good and evil.

Even after a cycle of millennial spiritual lordship ends with violence, disappointment or both, seeds have often been planted for its reincarnation. As Henrietta Leyser points out, the new class of hermits, who emerged in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, where rarely satisfied with their ventures. When the quest for spiritual utopia ends in disappointment, the leader moves on.[207] Even when a leader died, evidence suggests that his followers continued to practice the beliefs that he expounded, although typically with diminished excitement and enthusiasm. Each of the movements we have discussed laid the foundation for other, later movements in turn. Before the First Crusade, heretical movements were sparse, but afterward they grew in number. Eventually, defiance of the church's spiritual lordship, evident in each case that we have discussed here, became part of a significant social undercurrent in Western European society, contributing to the so-called Reformation of the Twelfth Century within the church and to later heretical movements.

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[207] Leyser, 3.

Even the briefest of heretical movements made their impact on the Western European mindset and gave the church cause for alarm. Even after Ramihrdus's short preaching career made an impact, the church was concerned that weavers continued to believe his message.[208] St. Norbert of Antwerp had to work long and hard to rectify Tanchelm's ten-year long heresy by his own preaching. But "men and women were stung with remorse" by Norbert's preaching and they eventually returned to orthodoxy.[209] Henry of Le Mans died in prison, but this was long after one of his disciples, Peter of Bruys, joined him to proselytize their dualist beliefs. Some have speculated that later heretical movements, such as the Cathars and Waldensians were influenced by the teachings of these men. [210]

For Peter the Hermit, the First Crusade continued despite the failure of the Popular Crusade. Peter had suffered three collapses of lordship. He failed as a member of the knightly class during the succession crisis in Flanders. He gave up lordship over his household after his wife, Beatrix, died. His millennial lordship failed, but he still maintained some spiritual lordship with the crusaders. He did, of course, had a powerful ally, Duke Godfrey of Bouillon. Godfrey founded the Kingdom of Jerusalem just before his death in 1100.

But in the end, Peter did attain both spiritual and secular lordship of a more lasting, orthodox kind. In 1105, about five years after the completion of the First Crusade, he departed back for home aboard a ship. With him was Lambart-the-Poor, count of Clermont, and nephew of Duke Godfrey of Bouillon. As the pair

[208] Wakefield and Evans, 96.
[209] Wakefield and Evans, 101 and 108.
[210] Wakefield and Evans, 108, 115.

returned together, a violent storm at sea threatened their lives. In the midst of this tribulation they both made a vow to become monks. Peter said he would start a new monastery.[211]

Indeed, Peter the Hermit founded the Neumostier priory in the suburbs of Huy within the Bishopric of Liege. There he died on June 6, 1115 and the age of 62 years. He had achieved his spiritual lordship, and his legacy has lasted down through the centuries, his story integral to the history of the First Crusade, despite fiction that surrounds the history. His grave was violated during the French Revolution but his tombstone remains. To this day, several families in France claim to be descendents of Peter the Hermit.

[211] Ordericus Vitalis, 75; and Goodsell, 98.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The First Crusade was a pilgrimage authorized by the pope and legitimized by the belief that its participants were fulfilling some part of God's plan. For many on this expedition, they saw themselves as part of an apocalyptic struggle between good and evil. But they also saw an opportunity to increase their material wealth, attain lordship status, or both. Furthermore, given that the crusade was dubbed as a pilgrimage, thousands outside of the knightly classes participated.

This was certainly not the first time common people participated in large religious movements. Mass pilgrimages to the Holy Land marched out of the feudal heartlands in 1064 and on the thousandth anniversary of Christ's death in 1033. The Peace of God movements encouraged the laity in general to help stem the violence between secular lords and restore order at home.

Still, by Pope Gregory VII's time, the crisis of secular lordship had led to a crisis of spiritual lordship. His reforms attempted to purify the church itself from secular influence, especially simony. This led to the Investiture Controversy with the Holy Roman Emperor and other rulers. By Gregory's death his reforms had been met with a stalemate or worse. In 1085 there were two popes, one appointed by the church and the other by the Holy Roman Emperor. Pope Urban II had to deal with this crisis in a new creative way. Thus, the First Crusade became the first time the church directed violence outside of feudal Europe to restore peace there.

Meanwhile, for many of the laity the crisis within both church and state represented a fundamental break down in the social order, which represented the fulfillment of millennial prophecies found in the Bible and Christian tradition.

Errant preachers, both monks and hermits, emerged during this time of crisis to establish their own millennial lordships in the wake of the failures of both secular and spiritual lordship. They tapped into the millennial undercurrents within society. While both traditional secular and spiritual lordship were relatively unstable, the lordships of these millennial spiritual lords were even more so. Many of their popular movements were relatively short lived, as in the case of Ramihrdus. Others like Henry of Le Mans could wander for decades spreading their messages, establishing a millennial lordship in one town before moving on to the next. Peter the Hermit's millennial spiritual lordship, the Popular Crusade, lasted only a few months, but in the end he gained legitimate spiritual and secular lordship over his own monastery.

These millennial lords were able to straddle the boundaries between orthodoxy and heresy, legitimacy and illegitimacy, spiritual and secular lordship, because the boundaries themselves in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries had broken down, had become blurred, or both. They used their powers of oration to establish themselves as legitimate in the eyes of their followers and to denounce their opponents. They justified their positions by being true followers of Christ, adhering to Christ's teachings of voluntary poverty found in the gospels. Opponents, however, resisted with a number of methods, including accusing them of heresy. The problem was, however, that outdated lexicon and political allegiances related to the Investiture Controversy at times confused who was a heretic and who was not.

Ramihrdus was burned as a heretic, but Pope Urban II himself found this terrible, because Ramihrdus was preaching against simony and thus supporting Gregorian Reform. Robert of Arbrissel found himself just short of being accused at a heretic because of his inclusion of women in prominent positions within his community at Fontevraud; yet he himself was known for his abilities to settle disputes between nobles. Peter the Hermit probably would have been labeled a heretic if he had led his followers against the church, just like Eudo of Brittany and Arnold of Brescia did some forty to fifty years latter. Yet even they wanted to reform the church, because society's millennial expectations taught people that the Apocalypse was eminent. Only the chosen would receive divine grace at Jesus' second coming.

Peter the Hermit and his fellow itinerant preachers were on the cusp of the great religious reformations of the twelfth century and onward. As the eleventh century progressed, the notions of sacred space became internalized in part because of the crisis of secular and spiritual lordship, but also the desire for a deeper connection with God, especially at the monastic level, beyond rituals such as the sacraments. Even the common laity desired this connection, given the rise of religious popular movements during this time, beginning with the Peace of God councils.

Like an ouroboros, the symbol of the snake eating its own tail, the millennial movements of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries each had their own cycle that would end, but in turn laid the foundation of future movements, both orthodox and heretical. The millennial spiritual lord became the head of this cycle, pointing out corruption or the persecution within a given orthodox group. In turn, this led to

drastic action and upheaval to bring order to the world in anticipation of Heaven coming to Earth. These movements, however, would end in disappointment as the Apocalypse—the revelation—that the anticipated apotheosis would not happen, or that material realities impeded or halted a millennial movement's progress toward this goal. The group would fall apart, but the followers would often fade back into the general populous. This, and the constant crisis within the secular and spiritual lordship, would inspire later movements. Even the church, as stated by Isidore of Seville and others, understood that heresy was an ongoing problem. The end of one heretical movement, as the church suspected, meant that the heresy would have gone underground for a time before it resurfaced.

This study of Peter the Hermit and his fellow itinerant preachers brings together ideas of lordship, heresy and orthodoxy, and millennialism for the first time. Previously, each category would be analyzed separately, such as lordship as it relates to the church during the Investiture Contest, or orthodoxy compared with heresy. Millennialism is often reserved for the study of certain groups, perhaps heretical, perhaps orthodox, but not analyzed and compared with notions of lordship. Peter the Hermit's millennial spiritual lordship serves as an example where all of these categories can fit together so that one can better grasp the motivations of popular religious movements in Western Europe from around 950 to 1250 AD.

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