

## Reform, Queenship and the End of the World in Tenth-Century France: Adso's "Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist" Reconsidered\*

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### 1. Introduction: Adso and Gerberga

Over the last two thousand years, western political discourse has frequently reserved a special place for the Antichrist. From the early Christian thinking which identified him with the Roman Emperor Nero to the more recent political invectives which railed against supposed modern incarnations such as Saddam Hussein and Ronald Reagan, Christ's final enemy has become a byword for ultimate human evil and has therefore proved to be an evocative, flexible and timeless vehicle for polemic of all kinds<sup>1</sup>. In the history of ideas about the Antichrist, few authors have been as influential as Adso, usually identified as abbot of the monastery of Montier-en-Der in the Champagne region from 968 until 992, and best-known as author of the "Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist", composed between 949 and 954 at the request of Queen Gerberga of West Francia. Adso's short treatise describes how the Antichrist will be born in Babylon under diabolical influence to Jewish parents, how he will "win over kings and princes to his cause", and how, preceded by two prophets, he will be received in Jerusalem as a false messiah before being killed by Christ in advance of Judgement Day. None of this will take place, according to the treatise, while the "Roman Empire" (represented by the kings of the Franks) persists, or before its final ruler abdicates on the Mount of Olives and thus "consummates the Christian Empire"<sup>2</sup>. The key to the tract's influence lay not in any originality of thought (most of what it said was drawn from canonical texts like the commentary on 2 Thessalonians by the ninth-century theologian Haimo of Auxerre and the myth of the Last Emperor preserved in Latin versions of the seventh-century Syriac text known as the Pseudo-Methodius) or aesthetic virtue (Adso's attempt to reconcile diverse

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\* I would like to record my gratitude for the advice and assistance of Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld, Jinty Nelson, James Palmer and especially Alain Dierkens. Earlier versions of this article benefited from the comments of audiences at the Universities of Bologna, Leeds and York.

The following abbreviations will be used:

MGH = *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (SS = *Scriptores*; SRG = *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi*; SRG NS = *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, nova series*; SRM = *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*)

CCCM = *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis*

<sup>1</sup> Bernard MCGINN, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York, 1996), p. 45-50, 65-67, 260, 273. See also Daniel GUTWEIN and Sophia MENACHE, "Just War, Crusade and Jihad: Conflicting Propaganda Strategies During the Gulf Crisis (1990-1991)", in *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Historie*, vol. 80, 2002, p. 385-400, at p. 397-398.

<sup>2</sup> For the text see ADSO, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi: necnon et tractatus qui ab eo dependunt*, ed. Daniel VERHELST, CCCM 45, Turnhout, Brepols, 1976; trans. Bernard MCGINN, *Apocalyptic Spirituality*, New York, Paulist Press, 1979, p. 89-96, whence all translations are drawn or adapted. The classic study is Robert KONRAD, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi. Antichristvorstellung und Geschichtsbild des Abtes Adso von Montier-en-Der*, Kallmünz, Lassleben, 1964; subsequent discussions include Claude CAROZZI and Huguette TAVIANI-CAROZZI, *La fin des temps. Terreurs et prophéties au moyen âge*, Paris, Stock, 1982, p. 186-194; MCGINN, *Antichrist, op. cit.*, p. 100-103; Claude CAROZZI, *Apocalypse et salut dans le christianisme ancien et médiéval*, Paris, Aubier, 1999, p. 13-26; Hannes MÖHRING, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit. Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer Tausendjährigen Weissagung*, Stuttgart, Jan Thorbecke, 2000, p. 144-148; Glauco Maria CANTARELLA, *Una sera dell'anno mille*, Milan, Garzanti, 2004, p. 247-252.

sources led to a certain amount of repetition and contradiction), but rather in its innovative structure<sup>3</sup>. By moulding the scattered exegetical and legendary material into a simple biographical format, Adso was the first author to truly personify the Antichrist; and by presenting him as an anti-saint whose life could be understood as a photo-negative of Christ's at every stage, he seemingly struck a chord in medieval culture<sup>4</sup>. The work's impact was almost instant: within a couple of years of Adso's death, his "Letter" was already being read and used in the entourages of such notable millennial figures as Archbishop Wulfstan of York and Emperor Otto III. The modern critical edition of the treatise is based on a staggering 171 manuscripts, which testifies eloquently to its great influence on numerous major writers of the central and later middle ages<sup>5</sup>.

Its lasting prestige is underlined by the fact that later generations often re-attributed the letter to such authoritative intellectual luminaries as Augustine and Alcuin. Yet this process of reinterpretation and repackaging – in which the dedication to Gerberga was also removed – can also stand as a symbol of how the original circumstances of the work's commissioning have been obscured by its spectacular *Nachleben*. Why did the queen of West Francia request that an as-yet obscure monk compose for her a treatise on the end of the world and the Antichrist? This is the question that the present article seeks to answer. As we shall see, most existing discussions resolve the issue by attributing to Gerberga a peculiarly sensitive religious sensibility that fed into a fear about the potential onset of the last days, sharpened by the approach of the year 1000. I propose instead to recontextualise her interest through a discussion of her political activities and her connection to influential protagonists of the Lotharingian monastic reform. After outlining the essentials of Gerberga's career, the article moves on to a critical evaluation of "apocalyptic" readings of the queen's interest. I will then present a case for understanding the text as a reflection firstly of Gerberga's dynastic status; and secondly as a product of her specific interest in monastic reform and her queenly identity. To anchor this identity in contemporary politics I will next analyse Gerberga's role in the West Frankish court around 950. The article ends in a spirit of speculation by questioning the traditional attribution of the "Letter" to the future abbot of Montier-en-Der, and suggesting that it may make more sense as the work of a different Adso in the queen's entourage. By working out from Adso's text my aim is thus not only to illuminate the circumstances of its inception, but also to explore aspects of queenship and political rhetoric in mid-tenth century Europe.

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<sup>3</sup> On Adso's sources see Maurizio RANGHERI, "La *Espistola ad Gerbergam reginam de ortu et tempore Antichristi* di Adson di Montier-en-Der e le sue fonti", in *Studi Medievali* 3<sup>rd</sup> series, vol. 14, 1973, p. 677-732; Daniel VERHELST, "La préhistoire des conceptions d'Adson concernant l'Antichrist", in *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, vol. 40, 1973, p. 52-103. Against Verhelst's doubts that Adso knew the Pseudo-Methodius see MCGINN, *Antichrist*, *op. cit.*, p. 312, n. 120. On the transmission of the Latin Pseudo-Methodius see Otto PRINZ, "Eine frühe abendländische Aktualisierung der lateinischen Übersetzung des Pseudo-Methodius", in *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, vol. 41, 1985, p. 1-23.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Kenneth EMMERSON, "Antichrist as Anti-saint: the Significance of Abbot Adso's *Libellus de Antichristo*", in *American Benedictine Review*, vol. 30, 1979, p. 175-190.

<sup>5</sup> For full details of the manuscript tradition see KONRAD, *De ortu*, *op. cit.*, p. 114-143; ADSO, *De ortu*, ed. VERHELST, *op. cit.*, p. 8-18; MÖHRING, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit*, *op. cit.*, p. 360-368. On Wulfstan's response to Adso see Patrick WORMALD, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 452-453.

Gerberga was unquestionably one of the pivotal figures in the dynastic politics of her age<sup>6</sup>. Born around 913, she was a daughter of the east Frankish/Saxon king Henry I (919-36) and sister of his celebrated successor Otto I “the Great” (936-73). She was not only a daughter and sister of rulers, but also a wife and mother. Her first marriage, probably contracted in 928, was to Giselbert, *dux* of Lotharingia, who died in 939 whilst rebelling against Otto; and her second husband, acquired in the same year she lost her first, was the young Carolingian king Louis IV of West Francia (936-54), her junior by some six or seven years. Their son Lothar (b. 941) became West Frankish king in 954. Gerberga’s royal upbringing and connections made her a potent figure throughout her career. While we have to be wary of an eleventh-century source which claims that she was the driving force behind Giselbert’s rebellion of 939, contemporary witnesses do confirm that she was at the duke’s side at key moments in his reign<sup>7</sup>. Marriage to Louis, who was often at loggerheads with Otto, and consecration as West Frankish queen, created potential for divided loyalties (that they named their son Lothar hints at an ambition to take Lotharingia, which was part of the eastern kingdom), but Gerberga was instrumental in effecting an eventual rapprochement between the two rulers and enlisting her brother’s help against her husband’s internal enemies in the late 940s<sup>8</sup>. The high point of her role as a bridge between the eastern and western dynasties came during her widowhood, which saw her acting as a kind of regent for her young son Lothar. Lothar’s marriage in 966 to Otto’s step-daughter Emma was planned with Gerberga’s active involvement and joined together the various branches of her family tree, placing her together with her brother at the apex of an extended European family of dynasties<sup>9</sup>. Gerberga died in 969<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> The best discussion of Gerberga’s career is Régine LE JAN, “La reine Gerberge, entre carolingiens et ottoniens”, in Régine LE JAN, *Femmes, pouvoir et société dans le haute moyen age*, Paris, Picard, 2001, p. 30-38. Her role in inter-dynastic politics is analysed by Winfrid GLOCKER, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen und ihre Bedeutung in der Politik*, Cologne and Vienna, Böhlau, 1989, p. 28-45; Joachim EHLERS, “Carolingiens, Robertiens, Ottoniens: politique familiale ou relations franco-allemandes”, in Michel PARISSÉ and Xavier BARRAL I ALTET, eds., *Le Roi de France et son royaume autour de l’an mil*, Paris, Picard, 1992, p. 39-45, esp. p. 42-43; Régine LE JAN, “D’une cour à l’autre: les voyages des reines de France au Xe siècle”, in LE JAN, *Femmes, pouvoir et société*, *op. cit.*, p. 39-52, esp. p. 47-50. Pauline STAFFORD, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: the King’s Wife in the Early Middle Ages*, London, Batsford, 1983, remains a vital starting point.

<sup>7</sup> Jocundus, *Miracula S Servatii*, ed. R. KÖPKE, MGH SS 12, Stuttgart, 1856, cc. 40-42, 78, p. 105-106, 122-125 (discussion and French paraphrases in Alain DIERKENS and Michel MARGUE, “*Memoria* ou *damnatio memoriae*? L’image de Giselbert, duc de Lotharingie (†939)”, in Sylvain GOUGUENHEIM et al, eds., *Retour aux sources. Textes, études et documents d’histoire médiévale offerts à Michel Parisse*, Paris, Picard, 2004, p. 869-890 at p. 883-887); *Liber memorialis von Remiremont*, ed. Eduard HLAWITSCHKA, Karl SCHMID and Gerd TELLENBACH, MGH Libri Memoriales 1, Dublin and Zurich, 1970, p. 9; LE JAN, “La reine Gerberge”, *op. cit.*, p. 32-34.

<sup>8</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. Philippe LAUER, *Les annales de Flodoard*, Paris, Picard, 1906, s.a. 946, 947, 948, p. 101-102, 105, 107-120; LE JAN, “La reine Gerberge”, *op. cit.*, p. 34-5. For Gerberga’s anointing see FLODOARD, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, ed. Martina STRATMANN, MGH SS 36, Hanover, 1998, IV.35, p. 430.

<sup>9</sup> For the significance of the marriage and Gerberga’s role in its arrangement (presumed to have taken place at the Ottonian family gathering at Cologne in 965) see *Vita Mathildis posterior*, ed. Bernd SCHÜTTE, *Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde*, MGH SRG, Hanover, 1994, c. 21, p. 188; *Vita Mathildis antiquior*, ed. SCHÜTTE, *Lebensbeschreibungen*, c. 11, p. 133; RUOTGER, *Vita Brunonis*, ed. Irene OTT, *Ruotgers Lebensbeschreibung des Erzbischofs Bruno von Köln*, MGH SRG NS, Weimar, 1951, c. 42, p. 44; GLOCKER, *Die Verwandten*, *op. cit.*, p. 41; LE JAN, “La reine Gerberge”, *op. cit.*, p. 30; EHLERS, “Carolingiens”, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> The date is not completely certain: see GLOCKER, *Die Verwandten*, *op. cit.*, p. 272-273.

## 2. The millennial Adso

The queen's interest in the Antichrist has usually been interpreted in the context of the approaching millennium and her anticipation of the apocalypse. That some people in the tenth century regarded the millennium as a key date in the fulfilment of scriptural prophecies about the last days, the appearance of Antichrist, the Second Coming and the Last Judgement should not be doubted, but scholars diverge widely in their estimation of the extent of such beliefs. Contemporary sources generally pay no attention to the possible apocalyptic or eschatological significance of the millennium, but historians such as Johannes Fried and Richard Landes have argued that this was precisely because their authors were churchmen anxious to uphold the orthodox exegetical position (derived from the authoritative work of St Augustine) that the date of the end was unknowable, and were consequently inclined to ignore, deny or condemn the existence of millennial beliefs among the laity. This clerical taboo (Fried), or conspiracy of silence (Landes), supposedly masked widespread lay anxiety, whose existence these historians nonetheless infer from an accumulation of oblique references in a huge variety of sources<sup>11</sup>.

Not least because it attempts to read texts concerned with eschatology (a set of orthodox and perennial beliefs relating to the end of the world and ultimate judgement) as evidence for the existence of apocalyptic millennialism (the radical belief that the end is imminent, and can be associated with specific calendar dates), this thesis has not achieved universal acceptance<sup>12</sup>. It has nonetheless proved very influential, and in particular has had a residual impact on prevailing interpretations of Adso's work, which, as one of a relatively small number of explicitly eschatological tenth-century works, enjoys a privileged place in the debate. Fried, Landes and others see the text as a direct response to "widespread apocalyptic disquiet", with Gerberga representing an archetypal layperson looking for reassurance that the troubles of the period did not mean that the last days were at hand, and Adso epitomising the religious professional eager to reassure his audience (in keeping with Augustinian

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<sup>11</sup> Johannes FRIED, "Awaiting the End of Time Around the Turn of the Year 1000", in Richard LANDES, Andrew GOW and David VAN METER, eds., *The Apocalyptic Year 1000. Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 17-63 (originally published as Johannes FRIED, "Endzeiterwartung um die Jahrtausendwende", in *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, vol. 45, 1989, p. 385-473); Richard LANDES, "Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography, 100–800 C.E.", in Werner D.F. VERBEKE, Daniel VERHELST and Andries WELKENHUYSEN, eds., *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1988, p. 137-211; Richard LANDES, "Millenarismus absconditus: L'historiographie augustiniennne et l'An Mil", in *Le Moyen Age*, vol. 98, 1992, p. 355-377; Richard LANDES, "Sur les traces du Millennium: La via negativa", in *Le Moyen Age*, vol. 99, 1993, p. 5-26. Several of Landes's publications can be conveniently accessed at: <http://www.mille.org>

<sup>12</sup> For subsequent debate see Sylvain GOUGUENHEIM, *Les fausses terreurs de l'an mil*, Paris, Picard, 1999; Johannes FRIED, "Die Endzeit fest im Griff des Positivismus? Zur Auseinandersetzung mit Sylvain Gouguenheim", in *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. 275, 2002, p. 281-321. For further references and discussion see Simon MACLEAN, "Apocalypse and Revolution: Europe around the Year 1000", in *Early Medieval Europe*, vol. 15, 2007, p. 86-106. For another (fragmentary) tenth-century Antichrist tract see Bernhard BISCHOFF, *Anecdota Novissima. Texte des vierten bis sechzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart, Hiersemann, 1984, p. 80-84.

orthodoxy) that the end was unpredictable to all but God, and that its imminence could not be inferred from worldly events<sup>13</sup>.

Taking it as read that Gerberga was a concerned figure in need of exegetical comfort, historians have not hesitated to identify the famously turbulent political environment of tenth-century France as the trigger for her millennial anxiety. Adso's editor Daniel Verhelst developed the classic exposition of this thesis, pointing to a number of troubling events that in sum he viewed as a crisis capable of inspiring apocalyptic fears: Louis IV's capture by the Northmen; repeated interventions in Francia by Otto I; and devastating Magyar raiding. Subsequent historians have endorsed and built upon his invocation of political unease<sup>14</sup>. These arguments have held the field in part because they chime with a widespread view of the tenth century as a "disorderly" or even "evil" period of West Frankish history defined by the progressive disintegration of the Carolingian political order<sup>15</sup>.

It is not my primary purpose here to pass judgement on the merits of the millennial thesis writ large, far less to tackle the vexed issue of tenth-century political structures, but there are significant problems with accepting this framework as the key to understanding Adso's text. There are in the first place methodological difficulties with interpreting such treatises too literally as reflections of millennial anxiety which are to be directly correlated with political crisis. Although Adso's letter did sometimes circulate with sermons, suggesting that its message was at times transmitted to the laity, Anke Holdenried's recent study of the manuscripts of the *Sibylla Tiburtina*, another eschatological prophecy, has underlined that very often these texts were used as intellectual resources. The frequent packaging of Adso's work with other prophecies which were similar in theme but incompatible in detail suggests a cross-referencing mentality that saw these texts as resources for learned discussion of eschatology, or for didactic demonstrations of Christ's divinity in disputations with other religions (an endeavour in which the Second Coming had always played a prominent part)<sup>16</sup>. What is more, it is sometimes forgotten that eschatological thought was as much a personal as a political business: the question of how they might fare at the Last Judgement was a ubiquitous concern to be faced by

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<sup>13</sup> Richard LANDES, "The Apocalyptic Dossier: 967-1033", no. 3, at <http://www.mille.org> for the quote; FRIED, "Awaiting the End", *op. cit.*, p. 36-37. Fried reads Adso's arguments as lukewarm rather than heartfelt and an indication that the monk himself was anticipating the end of the world.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel VERHELST, "Adso of Montier-en-Der and the Fear of the Year 1000", in LANDES, GOW and VAN METER, eds., *Apocalyptic Year 1000*, *op. cit.*, p. 81-92, at p. 84-85 (originally published as Daniel VERHELST, "Adso van Montier-en-Der en de angst voor het jaar Duizend", in *Tijdschrift voor Geschiednis*, vol. 90, 1977, p. 1-10). For endorsement, see for example FRIED, "Awaiting the End", *op. cit.*, p. 36-37; Richard LANDES, "The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern", in LANDES, GOW and VAN METER, eds., *Apocalyptic Year 1000*, *op. cit.*, p. 243-270 at p. 248; Jane T. SCHULENBURG, "Early Medieval Women, Prophecy, and Millennial Expectations", in Michael FRASSETTO, ed., *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the First Millennium*, New York, Palgrave, 2002, p. 237-256 at p. 241-243.

<sup>15</sup> Steven CARTWRIGHT, "Thietland's Commentary on Second Thessalonians: Digressions on the Antichrist and the End of the Millennium", in LANDES, GOW and VAN METER, eds., *Apocalyptic Year 1000*, *op. cit.*, p. 93-108 at p. 101; LANDES, "Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000", *op. cit.*, p. 248. For the debate about social/political breakdown see the "Debate on the Feudal Revolution" published in *Past and Present*, vol. 142, 1994, vol. 152, 1996, vol. 155, 1997.

<sup>16</sup> Anke HOLDENRIED, *The Sibyl and her Scribes. Manuscripts and Interpretation of the Sibylla Tiburtina, c. 1050-1500*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, p. 81-92. On Adso's packaging with sermons see FRIED, "Awaiting the End", *op. cit.*, p. 26-27.

individual Christians<sup>17</sup>. Treatises like Adso's could thus have been intended to address internalised religious anxieties, and need not have reflected collective fear fuelled by political circumstances.

More importantly, closer examination of the chronology of Louis IV's reign creates serious doubts about Verhelst's reconstruction of political crisis<sup>18</sup>. The composition of the letter can be dated fairly securely between 949 (the promotion of Louis IV's half-brother Rorico of Laon, referred to by Adso as *pastorem dominum*, to episcopal office) and 954 (the death of Louis, mentioned in the letter as still alive)<sup>19</sup>. This was not, in fact, a particularly troubled period – far from it. The Magyars had indeed raided Francia in 937, but other than a raid on Aquitaine in 951 thereafter caused no significant trouble until 954, shortly before Louis's death – and even then they are described by Flodoard of Rheims, our main source, as simply passing through the kingdom rather than raiding it<sup>20</sup>. Louis's capture by the Northmen at Rouen and subsequent imprisonment by his nemesis Hugh “the Great”, “duke of the Franks” and count of Tours, took place in 945-6 and were therefore well in the past by the time Gerberga asked Adso for his tract. In fact, the period between the Synod of Ingelheim in 948 and Louis's premature death in 954 was the high point of his reign. The proceedings at Ingelheim saw to the excommunication and embarrassment of the aristocratic opponents (including Hugh) who had undermined his authority for the first decade of his rule, confirmed the previously contested authority of Louis' main supporter Archbishop Artold of Rheims, and constituted a spectacular show of support for the king from the West Frankish and Lotharingian bishops<sup>21</sup>. Above all, the synod marked the point at which Louis and his brother-in-law Otto embarked upon a sustained period of cooperation which, facilitated by Gerberga, continued to benefit Louis for the rest of his reign, with the eastern king frequently intervening to underwrite his neighbour's authority over the West Frankish magnates<sup>22</sup>. In other

<sup>17</sup> HOLDENRIED, *Sibyl and her Scribes*, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii-iv; Paul MAGDALINO, “The Year 1000 in Byzantium”, in Paul MAGDALINO, ed., *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, Leiden and New York, Brill, 2003, p. 233-270, at p. 234.

<sup>18</sup> For narrative guides to Louis's reign see Philippe LAUER, *Le Règne de Louis IV d'Outre-Mer*, Paris, E. Bouillon, 1900; Carlrichard BRÜHL, “Ludwig IV. ‘der überseeische’ (936-54)”, in Joachim EHLERS, Heribert MÜLLER and Bernd SCHNEIDMÜLLER, eds., *Die französischen Könige des Mittelalters. Von Odo bis Karl VIII. (888-1498)*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 1996, p. 47-59.

<sup>19</sup> ADSO, *De ortu*, ed. VERHELST, *op. cit.*, p. 2-3. Two other dating frames have been suggested, but both are problematic: CAROZZI and TAVIANI-CAROZZI, *La fin des temps*, *op. cit.*, p. 188 date the text 953-954 on the grounds that Adso refers to Gerberga having more than one son; but her second and third sons had been born in 945 and 948: BRÜHL, “Ludwig IV.”, *op. cit.*, p. 47 provides details. RANGHERI, “La ‘Epistola’”, *op. cit.*, p. 690-693 posits a dating frame 945-54, presumably with the birth of the king's second son in mind, but dismisses the reference to Rorico rather too easily.

<sup>20</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 954, p. 137-138. Rheims had been raided by Magyars in the past and was in the vicinity of the 954 incident, so Flodoard's laconic account should not be dismissed as the carefree judgement of a detached outsider. In fact, much of the traditional appreciation of the Magyar impact west of the Rhine in this period is based on the semi-mythological accounts of late sources: Albert D'HAENENS, “Les invasions hongroises dans l'espace belge (954-955), histoire ou historiographie?”, in *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, vol. 4, 1961, p. 423-440; Hervé MOUILLEBOUCHE, “Les Hongrois en Bourgogne: le succès d'un mythe historiographique”, in *Annales de Bourgogne*, vol. 78, 2006, p. 126-168.

<sup>21</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 948, p. 107-120.

<sup>22</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 949, 950, 951, p. 122, 126-127, 130-131. Timothy REUTER, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, 800-1056*, London, Longman, 1991, p. 167 emphasises the significance of the Synod of Ingelheim for Otto's rule, which thereafter became more self-consciously imperial.

words, the period during which Adso wrote his “Letter” was one of unprecedented confidence and stability for Louis and his queen.

All this means that we need to find alternatives to political unrest / millennial anxiety to explain Gerberga’s interest in the Antichrist. One such context, Gerberga’s dynastic identity, is more or less explicit in the text so can be dealt with briefly. As mentioned above, Adso followed the mainstream of the western tradition of exegesis on the biblical books of Daniel and 2 Thessalonians by asserting that the end could not come until the “Roman Empire” had fallen, and by defining the continued existence of the empire as manifest in the ongoing rule of the “kings of the Franks”. By this latter term Adso meant, as Bernd Schneidmüller convincingly showed, the Carolingian kings of West Francia<sup>23</sup>. This has been read by most historians as a manifestation of more anxiety, a “strategy of postponement” designed to keep the day of reckoning at arm’s length<sup>24</sup>. Yet this was a flexible discourse that had long been used to flatter rulers by giving them a key role in the eschatological drama predicted by Christian prophecy, not a simple expression of fear that the fate of the world hung on the continuity of a single family. Accordingly, it survived unscathed across dynastic handovers such as those of 888 and 987<sup>25</sup>. That the passage was not meant to be read literally is made clear by Adso’s wholly anachronistic ascription of imperial status to the Carolingians. The persistence of this ideology should help convince us that its recipients like Gerberga were not wide-eyed naïfs in need of reassurance from religious professionals but that they understood and embraced this part of monastic thought. Queens are known to have been part of the audience for biblical exegesis in this period, and rulers actually engaged with and commented on even the most complex of theological tracts (unless we assume that Charlemagne’s feedback on the *Libri Carolini* was unique)<sup>26</sup>. There is no reason, with this in mind, to doubt Adso’s claim that Gerberga had “a pious desire to listen to the scriptures and often to speak about our Redeemer<sup>27</sup>.” Like the late-ninth-century emperor Charles III “the Fat” (who requested and surely understood Notker of St-Gall’s allusions to his empire as a continuation of the eschatological scheme derived from Daniel) or the millennial emperor Otto III (who artfully played with eschatological symbolism to enhance his own imperial stature) Gerberga was, we must presume, a ruler with a

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<sup>23</sup> Bernd SCHNEIDMÜLLER, “Adso von Montier-en-Der und die Frankenkönige”, in *Trierer Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst des Trierer Landes und seiner Nachbargebiete*, vol. 40/41, 1977/8, p. 189-199.

<sup>24</sup> LANDES, “Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000”, *op. cit.*, p. 247. KONRAD, *De ortu*, *op. cit.*, p. 109-113 argues that this was a strategic rhetoric designed to warn Louis’s enemies against trying to bring him down.

<sup>25</sup> Janet L. NELSON, “Kingship and Empire”, in Rosamond MCKITTERICK, ed., *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 52-87 at p. 72-73; MACLEAN, “Apocalypse and Revolution”, *op. cit.*, p. 101. See also Sylvain GOUGUENHEIM, “Adson, la reine et l’antichrist: eschatologie et politique dans le *De ortu et tempore antichristi*”, in Patrick CORBET, ed., *Les moines du Der, 673-1790*, Langres, D. Guéniot, 2000, p. 135-146.

<sup>26</sup> Mayke DE JONG, “Exegesis for an Empress”, in Mayke DE JONG and Esther COHEN, eds., *Medieval Transformations. Texts, Power and Gifts in Context*, Leiden, Boston and Cologne, Brill, 2001, p. 69-100; Janet L. NELSON, *Charlemagne and the Paradoxes of Power*, Southampton, University of Southampton, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> ADSO, *De ortu*, ed. VERHELST, *op. cit.*, p. 20; trans. MCGINN, *Apocalyptic Spirituality*, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

secure grasp of the inter-relationship between dynastic ideology and eschatological views of empire<sup>28</sup>.

### 3. Monastic reform and the Antichrist

This view of Gerberga as a collaborator in Adso's rhetoric rather than a passive student of his lessons is confirmed by a consideration of both parties' interest in monastic reform which, I will argue, provides us with a key to understanding the queen's interest in the Antichrist. The Lotharingian (or Gorze) reform was a defining phenomenon of the second third of the tenth century in the middle kingdom of the former Carolingian Empire. Drawing inspiration from the customs observed at Fleury, where the bones of St Benedict were thought to lie, the reformers sought to return monastic practice to (as they saw it) a stricter and more authentic interpretation of the Benedictine Rule<sup>29</sup>. Sponsored initially by bishops, counts and dukes, and latterly by kings, the reform spread outwards along political networks centred on nodal points such as Gorze (reformed 933/6), St-Maximin in Trier (reformed 934), and St-Evre, Toul (reformed 936). As in most such reforms, the vociferous rhetoric of renewal masked much underlying continuity, and powerful patrons were certainly not above deploying the language of reform to assert their own control of wealthy and strategically important institutions<sup>30</sup>.

The use of eschatological imagery by the ideologues of this reform is well known, but its influence on Adso's letter has not been widely noted<sup>31</sup>. The key passage here appears at the beginning of the treatise proper: "The Antichrist has many ministers of his malice. Many of them have already existed, like Antiochus, Nero and Domitian. Even now in our time we know there are many Antichrists. For anyone, layman, canon or even monk, who lives contrary to justice and attacks the rule of his order and blasphemes what is good is an Antichrist, a minister of Satan<sup>32</sup>." This is classic reformist rhetoric, in which the Antichrist is interpreted not simply as an individual (Satan's son or a harbinger of the end of the world), but also as a collective metaphor for enemies of a "correct" way of life. That Adso intended this comment at least in part as a comment on ideologies of monastic observance is made likely by the explicit

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<sup>28</sup> Simon MACLEAN, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 223-224; Matthew GABRIELE, "Otto III, Charlemagne and Pentecost AD 1000: A Reconsideration Using Diplomatic Evidence", in FRASSETTO, ed., *The Year 1000, op. cit.*, p. 111-132; Susan VON DAUM THOLL, "Visualizing the Millennium: Eschatological Rhetoric for the Ottonian Court", in LANDES, GOW and VAN METER, eds, *Apocalyptic Year 1000, op. cit.*, p. 231-240.

<sup>29</sup> Joachim WOLLASCH, "Monasticism: the First Wave of Reform", in Timothy REUTER, ed., *The New Cambridge Medieval History vol. 3, c. 900-1024*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 163-185 provides an excellent introduction.

<sup>30</sup> Alain DIERKENS, *Abbayes et chapitres entre Sambre et Meuse: VIIe- XI siècles*, Sigmaringen, Jan Thorbecke, 1985; John NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and Patrons in the Gorze Reform: Lotharingia, c. 850-1000*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> KONRAD, *De ortu, op. cit.*, p. 81-82, 145 is an exception, though in contrast to the following discussion he reads this in the context of thinking about the Three Orders.

<sup>32</sup> ADSO, *De ortu*, ed. VERHELST, *op. cit.*, p. 22: *Hic itaque Antichristus multos habet sue malignitatis ministros, ex quibus iam multi in mundo precesserunt, qualis fuit Antiochus, Nero, Domicianus. Nunc quoque, nostre tempore, Antichristos multos novimus esse. Quicumque enim, sive laicus, sive canonicus, sive etiam monachus, contra iustitiam vivit et ordinis sui regulam impugnat et quod bonum est blasphematur, Antichristus est, minister satane est.*



distinction he drew between *canonici* and *monachi*: “canons” was a term of abuse sometimes thrown around by reformers to insinuate the dissolution of their monastic enemies, who were not to be dignified with the status of proper monks<sup>33</sup>. This sense is intensified by Adso’s use of the word *regula* (rule) to define the lifestyle categories to which he was evidently so committed. Although his letter was a derivative and compilatory work, the emphatic deployment of this vocabulary was manifestly a conscious authorial decision since the word *regula* was an addition to the wording of his source, a passage from Isidore of Seville’s *Sententiae*<sup>34</sup>.

This sort of discourse came naturally to monks steeped in Benedictine spirituality, in which monks equated themselves with the virgins who were described in the Book of Revelation as dispensing Christ’s justice: “These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb<sup>35</sup>.” This identification was, as Dominique Iogna-Prat has argued, sharpened by the reforms of the tenth century, meaning that monastic authors of this period reached instinctively for eschatological imagery when defining their own role in the world<sup>36</sup>. But whatever level of influence this sensibility may have had on Adso’s thinking, the canon of western writings on the Antichrist lent itself extremely well to strategic deployment in disputes about religious observance. For early medieval Christians (including Isidore), the ultimate authority here was Augustine of Hippo, whose “Homilies on 1 John” established the idea that “Antichrists” was a label referring to heretics and schismatics, and potentially to anyone “that denies Christ by his works<sup>37</sup>.” Strategic accusations of hypocrisy and of resistance to correct religious practice lay at the heart of tenth-century reform rhetoric, so it is not surprising that Adso was far from the only contemporary author to invoke a discourse of corruption and bad living to call for reform or political change, and in doing so to brand those

<sup>33</sup> Jason GLENN, *Politics and History in the Tenth Century: The Work and World of Richer of Rheims*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 82-84 provides examples and discussion.

<sup>34</sup> ISIDORE, *Sententiae*, ed. Pierre CAZIER, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, Turnhout, Brepols, 1998, I.25, p. 79. Isidore: *Omnis qui secundum professionis suae normam aut non vivit aut aliter docet, Antichristus est.* Adso: *Quicumque enim...contra iustitiam vivit et ordinis sui regulam impugnat...Antichristus est.* For further (but less close) parallels see Verhelst’s footnotes to p. 22 of his edition. *Ordo* is also used by Adso to refer to the monastic life earlier in his treatise: p. 20, lines 17-18.

<sup>35</sup> Revelation 14:4 (New International Version).

<sup>36</sup> Dominique IOGNA-PRAT, “Contenance et virginité dans la conception clunienne de l’ordre du monde autour de l’an mil”, in *Comptes rendus de Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Comptes rendus des séances*, 1985, p. 127-146 at p. 136-137; Dominique IOGNA-PRAT, “Entre anges et homes: les moines ‘doctrinaires’ de l’an mil”, in Robert DELORT, ed., *La France de l’An Mil*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1990, p. 245-263, at p. 256-259. See also Dominique IOGNA-PRAT, *Order and Exclusion: Cluny and Christendom face Heresy, Judaism, and Islam (1000-1150)*, trans. G.R. Edwards, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2002.

<sup>37</sup> MCGINN, *Antichrist, op. cit.*, p. 76-77. This was the part of Augustine’s thinking on the Antichrist that most influenced later thought, though he was not necessarily consistent on the point: Lewis AYRES, “Imagining the End: the Augustinian Dynamics of Expectation”, in Sean FREYNE and Nicholas LASH, eds., *Is the World Ending?*, London, SCM, 1998, p. 40-49; FRIED, “Die Endzeit”, *op. cit.*, p. 300-312. Cf. ISIDORE, *Etymologies*, VIII.11.22, ed. Wallace Martin LINDSAY, Oxford, Clarendon, 1911: *Omnis enim, qui exeunt de Ecclesia et ab unitate fidei praeceduntur, et ipsi Antichristi sunt.* 1 John 2:18 represents the only explicit biblical reference to Antichrist: “Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.”

who resisted as Antichrists<sup>38</sup>. It was in this spirit that Archbishop Wulfstan of York, the noted Anglo-Saxon polemicist, channelled Isidore in very similar terms to Adso's: "All who profess correct Christianity, but do not live by it or teach it to others are antichrists<sup>39</sup>." Similarly, and at around the same time (early 990s) a group of Frankish bishops attempting to settle a long-running dispute over the archbishopric of Rheims sought to win the argument by labelling as antichrists the pope and his legates, who responded in kind<sup>40</sup>.

In the present context the most telling example of this lively exchange of views is the "Dialogue on the State of the Holy Church", a text from mid-tenth-century Laon. Although used by Fried in his assemblage of apocalyptic sources, this tract's references to "antichrists" are part of a critique of what the author saw as misuse of church resources<sup>41</sup>. This diatribe was explicitly polemical, as illustrated by the author's citation of Luke 11:23: "He who is not with me is against me<sup>42</sup>." This concern clearly aligns the anonymous author with the central aims of contemporary reformers – hardly surprising given he was writing in the circle of one of them, Bishop Rorico of Laon<sup>43</sup>. Rorico, of course, was mentioned in Adso's letter as a close confidant of Gerberga and an intellectual heavyweight whose own knowledge of the Antichrist rendered, Adso feared, his own advice redundant. Viewed in this light, Adso's treatise loses even more of its apocalyptic hue and starts to take on a different colour. Adso and Rorico evidently belonged to a group of churchmen associated with the royal court who shared an interest in monastic reform, and whose texts (the "Letter" and the "Dialogue") deployed accusations of Antichrist-hood as a means of rhetorically attacking those people, real or imagined, who opposed their reformist position<sup>44</sup>. The Antichrist was part of an armoury of images used by such reformers to talk to each other about their enemies. Adso's "Letter" can be seen as partaking of this self-affirmatory rhetoric, whose primary function was perhaps to define as a group those who used it.

It may not be surprising that churchmen like Adso and Rorico, with documented interests in monastic reform, belonged to such a group<sup>45</sup>. What is more striking is that Adso seemingly regarded Gerberga herself as a member: he addressed her not as an

<sup>38</sup> David VAN METER, "Apocalyptic Moments and the Eschatological Rhetoric of Reform in the Early Eleventh Century: The Case of the Visionary of St. Vaast", in LANDES, GOW and VAN METER, eds., *Apocalyptic Year 1000*, *op. cit.*, p. 311-325 is a useful exploration of this theme.

<sup>39</sup> Dorothy BETHURUM, ed., *The Homilies of Wulfstan*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1957, p. 113, 282-283; Joyce Tally LIONARONS, "Napier Homily L: Wulfstan's Eschatology at the Close of his Career", in Matthew TOWNEND, ed., *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2004, p. 413-428 at p. 422. In the same volume see also Joyce HILL, "Archbishop Wulfstan: Reformer?", p. 309-324.

<sup>40</sup> FRIED, "Awaiting the End", *op. cit.*, p. 39; Benjamin ARNOLD, "Eschatological Imagination and the Program of Roman Imperial and Ecclesiastical Renewal at the End of the Tenth Century", in LANDES, GOW and VAN METER, eds., *Apocalyptic Year 1000*, *op. cit.*, p. 271-287 at p. 275; GLENN, *Politics and History*, *op. cit.*, p. 276-284.

<sup>41</sup> FRIED, "Awaiting the End", *op. cit.*, p. 48-49; Heinz LÖWE, "Dialogus de statu sanctae ecclesiae. Das Werk eines Iren im Laon des 10. Jahrhunderts", in *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, vol. 17, 1961, p. 12-90, esp. p. 60-61, 76-78.

<sup>42</sup> LÖWE, "Dialogus", *op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>43</sup> LÖWE, "Dialogus", *op. cit.*, p. 37-57.

<sup>44</sup> LÖWE, "Dialogus", *op. cit.*, p. 64-65 points to general and verbal parallels between Adso's letter and the "Dialogue". GOUGUENHEIM, *Fausse terreurs*, *op. cit.*, p. 81-82 and (at more length) "Adson" argues that Adso's "antichrists" were Hugh the Great and Louis IV's other political enemies, but does not provide a very telling context for this assertion.

<sup>45</sup> See below for discussion of Adso's identity and reforming credentials.

ill-informed layperson, but rather as a fellow traveller. His introduction compliments the queen with what seems to be a reference to her interest in monasticism: “If the Lord bestows good fortune on you and longer life on your sons, we know and believe without doubt that God’s church must be exalted and our order of religion must be multiplied more and more<sup>46</sup>.” That this was more than just platitudinous flattery is strongly suggested by the terms used by Adso to address Gerberga in his opening phrase: “Brother Adso, the last of all her servants, [wishes] eternal glory and peace to the lady queen Gerberga, most excellent queen, mighty in royal dignity, beloved of God and cherished by all the saints, mother of monks and leader of holy virgins<sup>47</sup>.” “Leader of holy virgins” is a striking and unconventional title for a queen and refers clearly to contemporary monastic discourses: their identity as virgins was, as mentioned earlier, central to the self-perception of contemporary Benedictines, and in particular to those who regarded themselves as having been purified by reform. “Mother of monks” (*mater monachorum*) is equally unusual and likewise echoes the loaded lexicon of reform discourse in which the label *monachi* was used to distinguish “proper” monks from unreformed *clerici* or *canonici*. Adso presumably coined it as a feminised version of the title *pater monachorum* sometimes used in contemporary Frankish sources to refer to St Benedict himself and, by extension, to his abbots.

This would suggest that queenship and monastic leadership were subtly merged in Gerberga’s royal persona, a conclusion supported by other texts associated with the queen. Strikingly, the queen’s six-line epitaph also dwells on her dedication to the *vita monastica*<sup>48</sup>. Another fragment is found in a charter of Gerberga’s son King Lothar, which describes her in 961 as “lover of churches” (*ecclesiarum amatrix*)<sup>49</sup>. Indeed, every single one of her son’s ecclesiastical privileges up to 966 was mediated by the queen mother<sup>50</sup>. Finally, we have the “Life of Clothild”, perhaps written for Gerberga during the early part of her widowhood though probably not, as Monique Goulet has established (against the arguments of Karl-Ferdinand Werner), by Adso of Montier-en-Der<sup>51</sup>. In this text, which drew heavily on earlier writings, Clothild (wife of Clovis, the great Frankish king who reigned in the decades either side of 500) is represented above all as a founder of monasteries and patron of monastic life<sup>52</sup>. The power and status of Carolingian queens were, from the later ninth century, often

<sup>46</sup> ADSO, *De ortu*, ed. VERHELST, *op. cit.*, p. 20: *Quoniam si Dominus vobis prosperitatem dederit et filiis vitam longiorem, scimus indubitanter et credimus ecclesiam Dei exaltandam et nostre religionis ordinem magis ac magis multiplicandum.*

<sup>47</sup> ADSO, *De ortu*, ed. VERHELST, *op. cit.*, p. 20: *Excellentissime regine ac regali dignitate pollenti, Deo dilecte omnibusque sanctis amabili, monachorum matri et sanctarum virginum duci, domine regine Gerberge, frater Adso, suorum omnium servorum ultimus, gloriam et pacem sempiternam.*

<sup>48</sup> Edited by Karl STRECKER, *Die Ottonenzeit*, MGH Poetae 5, Leipzig, 1937, p. 286-287.

<sup>49</sup> Louis HALPHEN and Ferdinand LOT, eds., *Recueil des actes de Lothaire et de Louis V, rois de France (954-987)*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1908, no. 14. Despite the title, Carsten WOLL, “*Regina amatrix ecclesiarum et mater monachorum*. Zu kirchenpolitischem Engagement von Königinnen im Reich der späten westfränkischen Karolinger und früheren Kapetinger”, in Peter THORAU, Sabine PENTH and Rüdiger FUCHS, eds., *Regionen Europas – Europa der Regionen. Festschrift für Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke zum 65. Geburtstag*, Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, Böhlau, 2003, p. 45-64 only discusses Gerberga and her titles in passing.

<sup>50</sup> STAFFORD, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>51</sup> Karl Ferdinand WERNER, “Der Autor der *Vita Sanctae Chrothildis*. Ein Beitrag zur Idee der ‘Heiligen Königin’ und der ‘römischen Reiches’ im X. Jahrhundert”, in *Mittelateinisches Jahrbuch*, vol. 24/25, 1989-90, p. 517-551. Goulet’s arguments are discussed below.

<sup>52</sup> WERNER, “Der Autor”, *op. cit.*, p. 525. *Vita S. Chrothildis*, ed. Bruno KRUSCH, MGH SRM 2, Hanover, 1888, cc. 8, 11-14, p. 345-348.

described in terms that drew attention to their association with monasticism, and the vocabulary of abbatial power frequently overlapped with that of female royalty. Queenly power, often regarded as dangerous and volatile, was thus given sanction by assimilation to more acceptable models of feminine authority<sup>53</sup>. Our sources' allusions to Gerberga's interest in monasticism – which colour almost every West Frankish reference to her – surely belong in a continuum with such thinking. In the heady context of the tenth-century reform, this was a very pointed way of representing the queen's authority<sup>54</sup>. Given that the West Frankish representation of queenly power as pseudo-monastic contrasts sharply with the Ottonian sources' positioning of Gerberga in familial terms as daughter, mother, sister and widow, it must reflect a deliberately cultivated political identity<sup>55</sup>.

#### 4. The queen and the court circle of Louis IV

Close study of Flodoard's "Annals" (the only contemporary narrative source for mid-tenth century Francia) and the royal charters of Louis IV enable us to locate Gerberga's queenly identity and her interest in reform in a secure political context. Frankish royal charters of this period do not carry witness-lists, but we can nonetheless use them to catch at least a flavour of who was "in" and "out" at court by paying attention to the identity of people mentioned as intervening with the ruler on behalf of beneficiaries. Queens often acted in this capacity, and historians have been able to use their appearance in such documents as a barometer indicating fluctuating influence<sup>56</sup>. Although she married Louis in 939, Gerberga did not intervene in any of her husband's charters before 949: indeed, with only three exceptions she was not even included in the formulaic prayer clauses of the 20-odd diplomas known to have been issued during the first decade of their marriage<sup>57</sup>. This pattern shifted decisively at the end of the 940s, when Gerberga suddenly began to appear as an influential middle-woman in the distribution of royal patronage. Significantly, much of this activity was directly connected with the reform of specific monasteries. In October 949 she, along with a group of bishops, abbots and counts, petitioned Louis to reform the nunnery of Homblières on the Somme, asking the king "to replace the nuns, who

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<sup>53</sup> Janet L. NELSON, "Early Medieval Rites of Queen-Making and the Shaping of Medieval Queenship", in Anne J. DUGGAN, ed., *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1997, p. 301-315 (reprinted in Janet L. NELSON, *Rulers and Ruling Families in Early Medieval Europe: Alfred, Charles the Bald and Others*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1999); Simon MACLEAN, "Queenship, Nunneries and Royal Widowhood in Carolingian Europe", in *Past and Present*, vol. 178, 2003, p. 3-38.

<sup>54</sup> For Anglo-Saxon parallels see Robert DESHMAN, "*Benedictus monarcha et monachus*. Early Medieval Ruler Theology and the Anglo-Saxon Reform", in *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, vol. 22, 1988, p. 204-240; Simon MACLEAN, "Monastic Reform and Royal Ideology in the Late Tenth Century: Ælfhryth and Edgar in Continental Perspective", in Conrad LEYSER, David ROLLASON and Hannah WILLIAMS, eds., *England and the Continent in The Tenth Century: Studies in Honour of Wilhelm Levison (1876-1947)*, Brepols, Turnhout, forthcoming 2009.

<sup>55</sup> For the Ottonian sources see above, n. 9.

<sup>56</sup> For example: Franz-Reiner ERKENS, "Die Frau als Herrscherin in ottonisch-frühsalischer Zeit", in Anton VON EUW and Peter SCHREINER, eds., *Kaiserin Theophanu. Begegnung des Ostens mit dem Westen um die Wende des ersten Jahrtausends*, Cologne, Das Museum, 1991, p. 245-259; Franz-Reiner ERKENS, "*Sicut Esther regina*. Die westfränkische Königin als *consors regni*", in *Francia*, vol. 20, 1993, p. 15-38.

<sup>57</sup> Philippe LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV, roi de France (936-954)*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1914, nos. 22, 23, 30.

have not lived honestly enough or obeyed a strict enough monastic rule, with monks obedient to the [Benedictine] Rule and to an abbot<sup>58</sup>.” Just over a month later, after an assembly held “to discuss the state of the church and of the realm” and again surrounded by bishops and abbots, she reportedly persuaded Louis to impose reform and a new abbot on the monastery of St-Martin in Autun<sup>59</sup>. Next, at the end of 952, Flodoard reports that “Archbishop Artold [of Rheims] expelled the clerics who were serving at the monastery of St-Basle [Verzy] and sent monks into it<sup>60</sup>.” The annalist’s previous paragraph tells us indirectly that king and queen were present at Rheims when this took place; and Gerberga’s involvement at Verzy is confirmed by a later charter of Lothar which refers to her having endorsed her husband’s authorisation of the reform<sup>61</sup>. In the years around 950, the very period in which Adso dedicated his tract to her, we therefore know that Gerberga was emerging as a major patron of monastic reform. This provides a context for the activation of the queenly identity outlined above.

That Gerberga was a prime mover in her husband’s interest in monastic reform at the end of the 940s, rather than a mere onlooker, is further suggested by the trajectory of her queenly career, which peaked at exactly this point. As already mentioned, she made only rare and elliptical appearances in royal charters prior to 949. Flodoard provides better insights into her activities in this period. In 941 she was asked to intervene in the ongoing dispute over the see of Rheims while her husband was away; in 944 she is reported to have accompanied Louis on a diplomatic journey to Aquitaine (her role in this may be reflected in the fact that two of her three appearances in prayer-clauses are in charters associated with this visit); and in 946 we are told of her success in getting her brother Otto to help her husband, who had been imprisoned by his aristocratic enemies<sup>62</sup>. Despite the high profile that these interventions reflect, the small number of Flodoard’s references to Gerberga before 949 suggest that her influence was not yet fully formed, and that she only acted autonomously when her husband was absent<sup>63</sup>. After 949, however, she appears to have become a figure to be reckoned with. In addition to the reform charters already mentioned, the queen’s role in the distribution of royal patronage (the lifeblood of politics) is witnessed by references to her influence in privileges for St-Cécile at Montserrat (951) and St-Remi at Rheims (probably early 950s)<sup>64</sup>. In the former she is referred to as Louis’s *praeeminentia uxor dilectissima Giberga*, a far cry from the oblique and perfunctory *coniunx* of earlier documents. Accordingly, it is at this point that Flodoard begins to habitually refer to the queen’s role in major political events. The significance of her influence is best illustrated by his entry for 953, which

<sup>58</sup> LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, no. 32 (= Theodore EVERGATES, Giles CONSTABLE and William M. NEWMAN, eds., *The Cartulary and Charters of Notre-Dame of Homblières*, Cambridge, Mass., Medieval Academy of America, 1990, no. 2).

<sup>59</sup> LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, no. 33.

<sup>60</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 952, p. 134; trans. Steven FANNING and Bernard BACHRACH, *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966*, Peterborough, Ontario, Broadview, 2004, p. 57.

<sup>61</sup> HALPHEN and LOT, eds., *Recueil des actes de Lothaire*, *op. cit.*, no. 6 (= LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, no. 53).

<sup>62</sup> FLODOARD, *Historia*, ed. STRATMANN, *op. cit.*, IV.35, p. 431; FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 944, 946, p. 90-91, 101-102; LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, nos. 22, 23.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. LE JAN, “La reine Gerberge”, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>64</sup> LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, nos. 38, 47 (= HALPHEN and LOT, eds., *Recueil des actes de Lothaire*, *op. cit.*, no. 3).

describes how Gerberga renegotiated peace between Louis and Hugh “the Great” of Tours, the king’s most threatening rival: that Hugh is here reported to have specifically requested a meeting with Gerberga in order to set this diplomatic process in motion confirms the pattern we have gleaned from her appearances in royal charters<sup>65</sup>.

How do we explain Gerberga’s rising influence? The waxing and waning of queens’ power was often linked in this period to their reproductive capacity, and in particular to their relationship with their male children, future kings<sup>66</sup>. As a mother, Gerberga experienced success and tragedy in equal measure<sup>67</sup>. The birth of Lothar in 941 must have cemented her position at court, as also that of her daughter Gerberga in 940 or 942. Gerberga junior later married Count Adalbert of Vermandois, while a further daughter, Mathilda (born 943) was to marry King Conrad III of Burgundy around 965. Four further sons were born to the royal couple: Charles (b. 945) was given as a hostage to the Northmen while still an infant and died a few years later; Louis (b. 948) died shortly before his father in 954; while the twins Charles and Henry (b. 953) had contrasting fates, the former (as Charles of Lorraine) becoming duke of lower Lotharingia and rivalling Hugh Capet for the throne, the latter dying shortly after baptism. It is difficult to correlate this pattern of childbirth (and child death) with the fluctuations of Gerberga’s career, and there is no obvious indication that her virtually constant pregnancies had any adverse or beneficial effects on her influence at court. Although a queen could rise in influence as her sons grew older and more influential, even in 954 Lothar was no more than 13 and so cannot have been able to build up much of a power-base on which Gerberga might have piggy-backed. This was especially the case since Louis IV himself was only in his early 30s when he unexpectedly died (in an archetypally Carolingian hunting accident), so there was no prolonged period of jostling for position among potential successors.

A more likely source of resistance to Gerberga’s influence earlier in the 940s came in the shape of the other women at court, in particular her mother-in-law Eadgifu. Although female influence is often difficult to recover from the laconic male-oriented sources that constitute most of our evidence, historians have shown that women played prominent roles in early medieval court politics<sup>68</sup>. Tensions between powerful women were a part of this, and the queen / queen-mother relationship appears, for example, to have been a tricky one in Otto I’s family: to judge from their appearances in royal charters, his mother Mathilda seems only to have regained influence after the death of his first wife Edith in 946, and her biographers hint at tensions between the

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<sup>65</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 953, p. 135; trans. FANNING and BACHRACH, *Annals*, *op. cit.*, p. 57. Adso’s odd statement that “if I were able to gain the whole kingdom for you, I would do it most gladly” (*De ortu*, ed. VERHELST, *op. cit.*, p. 20; trans. MCGINN, *Apocalyptic Spirituality*, *op. cit.*, p. 89) echoes promises made to biblical queens including Esther and may thus allude to Gerberga’s influence: GOUGUENHEIM, *Les fausses terreurs*, *op. cit.*, p. 84-85; GOUGUENHEIM, “Adson”, *op. cit.*, p. 141-143.

<sup>66</sup> Pauline STAFFORD, “Sons and Mothers: Family Politics in the Early Middle Ages”, in Derek BAKER, ed., *Medieval Women*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1978, p. 79-100.

<sup>67</sup> For further references see BRÜHL, “Ludwig IV.”, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>68</sup> Janet L. NELSON, “Gendering Courts in the Early Medieval West”, in Leslie BRUBAKER and Julia M.H. SMITH, eds., *Gender in the Early Medieval World. East and West, 300-900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 185-197.

two women<sup>69</sup>. A similar, though inverse, situation seemingly pertained at Louis's court, where Gerberga's stock rose in direct correlation with her mother-in-law's decline. Eadgifu was clearly a great influence on her son, having been more or less solely responsible for his upbringing in exile in Wessex, where they had fled after the deposition and imprisonment in 923 of Louis's father Charles the Straightforward<sup>70</sup>. Her influence did not abate after Louis's return to Francia in 936, at which time he was still only around 15 years of age. Flodoard's comment in his annal for 937 illustrates this implicitly: "King Louis withdrew himself from the management of the *princeps* Hugh [the Great] and received his mother [Eadgifu] at Laon<sup>71</sup>." Eadgifu's ability to support Louis resided less in any ability to automatically resume the functions of a queen (this status having surely lost its relevance during more than a decade in exile) than in her residual claims to key royal estates, the pursuit of which dominated the early years of the young king's reign. The fact that some of her sisters were married to rulers at courts around Europe (Otto's wife Edith being the most important) also put her in a unique position of influence<sup>72</sup>. Yet her power appears to have been eroded by the end of the 940s, just as Gerberga was coming into her own. In the end, Eadgifu stormed out of her son's life in 951 and married his enemy Count Herbert III "the Elder" of Vermandois, causing the king, according to Flodoard, much anger<sup>73</sup>. That her frustration was a direct result of Gerberga's rise is suggested by the fact that immediately her mother-in-law's back was turned, the queen was given control of most of the churches and queenly estates which had formerly sustained Eadgifu's position<sup>74</sup>.

A likely catalyst for the shift in the balance of power between the two women can be identified in the death of Edith in January 946. Her sister's demise must have diminished Eadgifu's role in Louis's diplomacy with the Saxon king. Gerberga now became the key player in east-west relations, at a time when, as already noted, her husband was increasingly reliant on her brother for support. Friendship between the two kings, which was more or less continuous after 948, may have been both cause and consequence of Gerberga's growing prominence. Flodoard implicitly confirms this hypothesis in his entry for 946, in which he directly follows his report of Edith's death, and that of her brother King Edmund of Wessex, with an account of an embassy sent to Otto's court by Gerberga<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> Karl LEYSER, "The Ottonians and Wessex", in Karl LEYSER, *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: I. The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, ed. Timothy REUTER, London and Rio Grande, Hambledon, 1994, p. 73-104 at p. 86-91.

<sup>70</sup> I refer to Charles as Straightforward rather than Simple following Bernd SCHNEIDMÜLLER, "Die 'Einfältigkeit' Karls III von Westfrankreich als frühmittelalterliche Herrschertugend. Überlegungen zu den cognomen *simplex*", in *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, vol. 28, 1978, p. 62-66.

<sup>71</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 937, p. 65; trans. FANNING and BACHRACH, *Annals, op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>72</sup> On both aspects of Eadgifu's career see Simon MACLEAN, "Making a Difference in Tenth-Century Politics: King Athelstan's Sisters and Frankish Queenship", in Paul FOURACRE and David GANZ, eds., *Frankland. The Franks and the World of Early Medieval Europe. Essays in Honour of Dame Jinty Nelson*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2008, p. 167-190.

<sup>73</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 951, p. 132. She ended her life and was buried at the Herbertine stronghold of Soissons: her epitaph is printed by Jean MABILLON, *Vetera Analecta*, Paris, Montalant, 1723, p. 377-378.

<sup>74</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 951, p. 132. For further references and substantiation see MACLEAN, "Making a Difference", *op. cit.*.

<sup>75</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 946, p. 101.

Gerberga was not, however, the only “new” face in the king’s inner circle around this time. The charters in which she appears also feature a variety of prominent bishops and counts whose influence with the West Frankish king appears to have been previously negligible, and who can therefore be seen as part of a new court circle that emerged after 949. Consideration of these characters’ careers suggests that they had two things in common above all: prominent involvement in monastic reform and a close association with the queen. The most high-profile of these men were Bishops Gauzlin of Toul (922-62), who intervened along with others for the reform of St-Martin at Autun in 949, and Adalbero I of Metz (929-62), who interceded for a royal grant to the small monastery of Salonne in 950<sup>76</sup>. The appearance of these bishops in Louis’s charters is all the more striking in that their bishoprics lay outside his kingdom, in Lotharingia, and without doubt the immediate context for their influence with the West Frankish king therefore lies in his close relationship with Otto in 949-50. Flodoard’s annals for these years describe a complex series of negotiations whose outcome was the cutting down to size of Hugh the Great, who now seemingly became answerable to Otto, and the return to Louis of the crucial stronghold of Laon<sup>77</sup>. Otto entrusted these negotiations to leading Lotharingians led by Duke Conrad “the Red” and Adalbero, the latter’s influence certainly helped by the fact that his brother was engaged to Hugh’s daughter<sup>78</sup>. Flodoard, however, leaves us in no doubt that Gerberga was the key figure in greasing these particular wheels: she it was who initiated Louis’s return to stability with a visit to her brother’s court at Easter in 949; and in 953 (as we have seen) it was she that Hugh the Great approached in order to confirm his friendship with the king<sup>79</sup>.

Yet the appearance of these Lotharingian bishops at the West Frankish court can also be viewed in a longer perspective. Adalbero of Metz and Gauzlin of Toul are usually seen as the initiators and leaders of the monastic reform movement, overseeing the reforms of Gorze in 933/6 and St-Evre in 936 respectively, and their association with Gerberga dated back to the period of her first marriage to *dux* Giselbert of Lotharingia<sup>80</sup>. After dying in rebellion against Otto in 939, Giselbert was subjected to a sustained campaign of *damnatio memoriae* which effectively wiped from the main historical record the great authority he had wielded during the 920s and 930s and recast his rule as a manifestation of illegitimate power<sup>81</sup>. This power was built in part on a close alliance with the Saxon king Henry I (hence his marriage to Henry’s daughter Gerberga), but Henry’s recognition of Giselbert as *dux* in 928 did not create so much as endorse his position. Giselbert’s pre-existing authority was articulated most clearly in his ardent accumulation of monasteries including such major houses as St-Servatius in Maastricht, Chèvremont, Stavelot-Malmedy, Echternach, Remiremont and St-Maximin in Trier, most of which had formerly been central struts of Carolingian royal power in Lotharingia<sup>82</sup>. Giselbert was not only a great monastic proprietor, but also an eager patron of reform – indeed, he was probably the first secular ruler to sponsor the Lotharingian reformers. The impulse for this patronage

<sup>76</sup> LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, nos. 33, 34.

<sup>77</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 949, 950, p. 121-128.

<sup>78</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 951, 954, p. 130, 139 for the relationship.

<sup>79</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 949, 953, p. 122, 135.

<sup>80</sup> On Adalbero and Gauzlin as reformers see NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, p. 16-19, 71-86, 132-136.

<sup>81</sup> See above all DIERKENS and MARGUE, “*Memoria*” *op. cit.*.

<sup>82</sup> DIERKENS and MARGUE, “*Memoria*”, *op. cit.*, p. 872 for a complete list. Further on Giselbert see Rüdiger BARTH, *Der Herzog in Lotharingen im 10. Jahrhundert*, Sigmaringen, Jan Thorbecke, 1990.



was surely spiritual in some measure, but simultaneously served as one of the methods by which the *dux* established his control over these important houses. Already by the start of the 930s he was alert to the possibilities of this strategy, collaborating with St Gerard of Brogne in the reform of St-Ghislain in Hainaut, apparently with the intention of extending his influence into a key frontier region, and in 934 we meet him pulling the strings during the reform of St-Maximin<sup>83</sup>. For present purposes, the most significant of Giselbert's reforms was that carried out at the nunnery of Remiremont in the Vosges around 933. Although the precise character of this reform is unclear there is no doubt that it represented a highly political intervention by Giselbert, intent on evicting Count Boso, current incumbent of the lay abbacy. The main evidence for the reform of the nunnery comes from a detailed entry in its *Liber Memorialis* (commemoration book) which names as participants in the reform, and in Giselbert's circle of allies, Bishops Adalbero and Gauzlin. In fact, as Eduard Hlawitschka has shown, the entry reveals a critical moment in the factional politics of the middle kingdom at which the most powerful Lotharingian bishops threw their hats into the ring with the *dux*<sup>84</sup>. The *Liber Memorialis* is also clear about the presence on this occasion, and implicitly the influence, of Giselbert's wife Gerberga.

Adalbero and Gauzlin seem to have been politically close, and often appear in the sources of the 930s and 940s acting together<sup>85</sup>. Their appearance in West Frankish charters in the late 940s alongside their old ally Gerberga could therefore be attributed to the queen's reactivation of political and personal networks that had lain dormant since the death of her first husband a decade earlier, made possible by Louis's diplomatic entente with Otto and the raised levels of influence this afforded the queen<sup>86</sup>. The details of the charters in which they intervened support this hypothesis. The privilege in which Gauzlin appears, for St-Martin in Autun, was issued on the eve

<sup>83</sup> St-Ghislain: DIERKENS, *Abbayes et chapitres*, *op. cit.*, p. 230-232; Anne-Marie HELVÉTIUS, *Abbayes, évêques et laïques. Une politique du pouvoir en Hainaut au Moyen Âge (VIIe-XIe siècle)*, Brussels, Crédit Communal, 1994, p. 213-234 (arguing that Giselbert should here be seen as founder rather than reformer); DIERKENS and MARGUE, "Memoria", *op. cit.*, p. 874-875; Matthew ZIMMERN, "Hagiography and the Cult of Saints in the Diocese of Liège, c. 700-980", unpublished PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 2007, p. 127-131. St-Maximin: NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, p. 218-234.

<sup>84</sup> Eduard HLAWITSCHKA, "Herzog Giselbert von Lothringen und das Kloster Remiremont", in *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins*, vol. 108, 1960, p. 422-465. Hlawitschka's reconstruction is endorsed with qualifications by DIERKENS and MARGUE, "Memoria", *op. cit.*, p. 876-879. For the bishops' loyalty to Giselbert during his rebellion against Otto and Adalbero's continuation of the struggle even after his death see ADALBERT, *Continuatio Reginonis*, ed. Friedrich KURZE, *Reginonis abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum continuatione Treverensi*, MGH SRG, Hanover, 1890, s.a. 939, p. 161. HLAWITSCHKA, "Herzog Giselbert", *op. cit.*, p. 428 suggests that Adalbero may have been a close relative of Giselbert. See also Gerd ALTHOFF, *Amicitiae und Pacta: Bündnis, Einung, Politik und Gebetsgedenken im beginnenden 10. Jahrhundert*, Hanover, Hahn, 1992, p. 237-239. However, some passages in the *Life of John of Gorze* show that Adalbero and Giselbert did not always see eye to eye: Michel MARGUE, "Aspects politiques de la 'réforme' monastique en Lotharingie. Le cas des abbayes de Saint-Maximin de Trèves, de Stavelot-Malmedy et d'Echternach (934-973)", in *Revue Bénédictine*, vol. 98, 1988, p. 31-61, at p. 34-42; Alain DIERKENS, "L'auteur de la *Vita Sancti Berigisi Abbatis* (BHL 1180): Frédéric, prévôt de Gorze puis abbé de Saint-Hubert (†942)", in E. Renard et al., eds., *Scribere sanctorum gesta. Recueil d'études d'hagiographie médiévale offert à Guy Philippart*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2005, p. 418-440, at p. 421-424.

<sup>85</sup> HLAWITSCHKA, "Herzog Giselbert", *op. cit.*, p. 438-439.

<sup>86</sup> Gauzlin had also been a notary at Charles the Straightforward's court, though Louis IV was a mere infant at the time: Philippe LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Charles III le Simple: roi de France*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1940, p. xix-xxv.

of St. Martin's feast day in 949 and is probably to be seen as part of Louis's tending of his relationship with Hugh the Black, *dux* of Burgundy, a consistent supporter of his who also played an important role in mediating his alliance with Otto in 949-50<sup>87</sup>. The charter's text describes a discrete group of nobles, described as *regni nostri primores* ("the leading men of our kingdom") whose support was seen as underwriting the grant: Archbishop Artold of Rheims, Bishops Gauzlin of Toul and Achardus of Langres, abbot Hincmar of St-Remi and counts Rainald (Ragenoldus) of Roucy, Bernard of Beauvais and Theoderic of Réthel. Gerberga's name appears at the head of this list<sup>88</sup>. Although she is not named in the charter featuring Adalbero other than in the prayer clause, the queen's influence is strongly suggested by the privilege's details<sup>89</sup>. This grant consisted of 12 manses at Salonne (arr. Château-Salins) to the priory of St-Denis, also at Salonne. The gift's resonance for Louis may be reflected by the inclusion of his father in the prayer clause: Charles the Straightforward had also patronised the house in 896, which is perhaps why the West Frankish king's charter was now being sought for a Lotharingian transaction<sup>90</sup>. Adalbero petitioned for the grant together with his *fidelis* (follower) Ansfrid, from whose benefice the land was being taken, and a certain Folmar. Folmar came from a family with close links to St-Maximin in the period of Giselbert's control, and is identified in a Gorze charter as a *fidelis* of Adalbero, again in the period when the latter was close to the *dux*<sup>91</sup>. Ansfrid, meanwhile, is identified by Widukind of Corvey as a close ally of Giselbert who held out at the key ducal stronghold of Chèvremont in 939 even after the *dux* had died and most of the Lotharingian rebels had submitted<sup>92</sup>. In this undertaking they had been joined by Adalbero, another stalwart ducal supporter, who also resisted Otto for some time after his Lotharingian allies had given in<sup>93</sup>. The people mentioned in these charters therefore lead us back directly to the circle of powerful aristocrats surrounding Giselbert and Gerberga during the 930s, reinforcing the notion that their appearance at the West Frankish court around 950 was brokered by the queen.

Tracing the careers of other new faces at Louis IV's court in the period of his alliance with Otto also leads us back more often than not to the queen. One such figure, the king's half brother Rorico, we have already met as a patron of reform and, in Adso's words, as a "most prudent pastor and brilliant mirror of all wisdom and eloquence". Also according to Adso, he was a close confidant of the queen and stood "at [her] side"<sup>94</sup>. Prior to his promotion to the bishopric of Laon in 949 Roric had been a fairly marginal figure, serving time as a notary and then chancellor in the royal writing office<sup>95</sup>. The fortified town of Laon was one of the two main poles of Louis IV's

<sup>87</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 950, p. 127.

<sup>88</sup> LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, no. 33.

<sup>89</sup> LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, no. 34.

<sup>90</sup> LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Charles III le Simple*, *op. cit.*, no. 7. On Salonne see Geoffrey KOZIOL, "Charles the Simple, Robert of Neustria, and the *vexilla* of St-Denis", in *Early Medieval Europe*, vol. 14, 2006, p. 355-390 at p. 378, 386, 389-390.

<sup>91</sup> Armand D'HERBOMEZ, ed., *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Gorze*, Paris, Mettensia, 1898, no. 96; NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, p. 89-90, 161-162, 278.

<sup>92</sup> WIDUKIND OF CORVEY, *Rerum Gestarum Saxoniarum Libri Tres*, ed. Paul HIRSCH, MGH SRG, Hanover, 1935, II.28, p. 89-91. Chèvremont may have been part of Henry I's dowry to Gerberga: DIERKENS and MARGUE, "Memoria", *op. cit.*, p. 889.

<sup>93</sup> ADALBERT, *Continuatio Reginonis*, ed. KURZE, *op. cit.*, s.a. 939, p. 161.

<sup>94</sup> ADSO, *De ortu*, ed. VERHELST, *op. cit.*, p. 21 ("apud vos habetis").

<sup>95</sup> On Rorico as notary see LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, introduction.

slender authority (Rheims being the other), and Rorico was initially granted the see at a time when it was in the hands of Hugh the Great: consequently, he had to take up residence at the stronghold of Pierrepont after being consecrated at Rheims. Later in 949, Gerberga was instrumental in organising the military force that recaptured Laon for the king and enabled the new bishop to take up his post<sup>96</sup>. Her links to the city seem, on other evidence, to have been strong. She was certainly residing there already by 945 when she gave birth to her son Charles, and the following year saw her in control of the town while her husband was in captivity<sup>97</sup>. Another allusion of Flodoard's suggests that Laon was one of Gerberga's "royal residences", and in 951 (as mentioned earlier) she took over the nunnery of St-Mary there from her mother-in-law<sup>98</sup>. Given the timing of Rorico's promotion, Adso's description of his closeness to Gerberga and the queen's evident authority in Laon, it is not beyond the realms of plausibility that her patronage was important in his acquisition of the bishopric.

Another conspicuous figure in the sources from the late 940s is count Rainald of Roucy (and Rheims), the queen's son-in-law from her first marriage to Giselbert<sup>99</sup>. Like Rorico's, his rise to prominence seems to have mirrored Gerberga's closely. We first meet him in the pages of Flodoard alongside the queen, receiving control of the fortress of Montigny-Lengrain from Louis, and thereafter he seems to have become one of the king's most trusted military leaders, frequently fighting in defence of the church of Rheims. In 948 Flodoard refers to him as *Ludowici comes*, which may be better translated as Louis's "companion" rather than "count"; and in 953 the king intervened in person to get Rainald off the hook when he faced excommunication for alleged misuse of church lands<sup>100</sup>. His influence, though, peaked in 949 and 950, when we find him intervening in three charters, including the privileges for Homblières and St-Martin, Autun (in which he is listed among the *primores regni*) alongside Gerberga<sup>101</sup>. Another blast from the past appeared in 952 in the shape of the "abbot Odelric" entrusted by Louis (and Gerberga) with the campaign against the crucial fortress of Vitry-en-Perthois<sup>102</sup>. Odelric, future archbishop of Rheims (962-9), was an associate of Gauzlin of Toul's and a prominent reformer. He and his family had also previously been in bed with Giselbert and Gerberga: his brother Arnulf, count in the Chaumontois, had been instrumental in the *dux*'s wresting control of Remiremont in the earlier 930s, and Odelric himself apparently fulfilled an abbatial function at the nunnery (hence Flodoard's description of him as "an abbot from Burgundy"<sup>103</sup>). A Count Odelric, probably his relative, intervened alongside Gerberga in Louis's charter for St-Cécile in Montserrat in 951<sup>104</sup>.

<sup>96</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 949, p. 122-123. Hugh kept the tower at Laon until 950.

<sup>97</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 945, 946, p. 95-96, 101. She was forced to hand it over to Hugh in return for Louis's release.

<sup>98</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 948, 951, p. 112, 132. Gerberga had also been consulted at Laon about the dispute over the archbishopric of Rheims in the early 940s: FLODOARD, *Historia*, ed. STRATMANN, *op. cit.*, IV.35, p. 431; Michel SOT, *Un historien et son église au Xe siècle: Flodoard de Reims*, Paris, Picard, 1993, p. 287-289.

<sup>99</sup> LÖWE, "Dialogus", *op. cit.*, p. 49, n. 120.

<sup>100</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 944, 945, 947, 948, 949, 950, 952, 953, p. 91, 97, 106, 117, 123-124, 128, 133, 136.

<sup>101</sup> LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, nos. 32, 33, 35.

<sup>102</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 952, p. 134 implies that Gerberga was involved in the grant to Odelric.

<sup>103</sup> HLAWITSCHKA, "Herzog Giselbert", *op. cit.*, p. 426-428, 444-445; Eduard HLAWITSCHKA, "Zur Lebensgeschichte Erzbischof Odelrichs von Rheims", in *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des*

To summarise the argument so far, the West Frankish charters we have been considering seem to indicate the emergence of a new court circle that took shape around Louis IV in the years after 949, a period which also witnessed the increasing stability of Louis's regime and, not coincidentally, the growing power of his wife. The bishops, counts and others we have discussed had in common their links to monastic reform and their associations past or present with Gerberga, who must have acted as the interface between these members of the elite, many of them Lotharingian, and the king. This is not to argue that these people now completely dominated Louis's entourage. Other figures of influence in these years do not fit neatly into our jigsaw of reconstituted Giselbertines. We also have to remember that the agenda and ideology of monastic reform did not articulate the interests of a monolithic pressure group or political faction, and neither did they map straightforwardly onto the loyalties or strategies of particular aristocratic families<sup>105</sup>.

If Louis IV and Gerberga had motives beyond the spiritual for taking such a vigorous interest in the patronage of reformed monasticism, the sources do not tell us what they were. Spiritual inclinations should certainly not be ruled out, especially since, after 946, Archbishop Artold of Rheims, a very influential reformer, was restored not only to his archiepiscopal see but also to his place at the king's right hand<sup>106</sup>. Even so, we still need to ask: why now? After all, monastic reformers had been active in Louis's realm before he became a sponsor himself: St-Remi, for example, had been reformed in 945 and abbot Hincmar appointed under the supervision of Archbishop Hugh (at a time when both Louis and Artold were very firmly on the back foot)<sup>107</sup>. The timing and nature of the king's interventions must have had a political dimension simultaneous with and indistinguishable from the desire to reform for its own sake. Monastic reform as authorised by secular potentates could, as shown by the example of Giselbert, have a strategic purpose, extending a ruler's power into contested frontier areas by strengthening the bond between patron and institution. In this context it is worth noting that the reforms sanctioned by Louis at Autun and Homblières concerned institutions in regions on the fringes of his influence.

Homblières also illustrates the extent to which such institutions could offer entry-points to the networks of prominent churchmen and patrons which, as John Nightingale has recently underlined, transmitted and articulated the reform<sup>108</sup>. The

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*Oberrhens*, vol. 109, 1961, p. 1-20; Michel PARISSÉ, "Das Anteil der lothringischen Benediktinerinnen an der monastischen Bewegung des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts", in Peter DINZELBACHER and Dieter R. BAUER, eds., *Religiöse Frauenbewegung und mystische Frömmigkeit im Mittelalter*, Cologne and Vienna, Böhlau, 1988, p. 83-97 at p. 56; NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, p. 151-152.

<sup>104</sup> LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, no. 38. On the relationship between the two Odelrics, see NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, p. 153, 278.

<sup>105</sup> Eg. NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, p. 132-166. Space precludes discussion of the conflict between Ragenarius III of Hainaut (Giselbert's nephew), Conrad the Red and Hugh the Great reported in 951-952 by Flodoard, which must have been related to the circumstances we have been outlining.

<sup>106</sup> On the struggle over the see of Rheims see now GLENN, *Politics and History*, *op. cit.*, p. 215-234.

<sup>107</sup> FLODOARD, *Historia*, ed. STRATMANN, *op. cit.*, IV.28, 32, p. 419-420, 424; NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, p. 140-141; Michel BUR, "Saint-Thierry et le renouveau monastique dans le diocèse de Reims au Xe siècle", in Michel BUR, ed., *Saint-Thierry, une abbaye du VIe au XXe siècle*, Saint-Thierry, Association des amis de l'Abbaye de Saint-Thierry, 1979, p. 39-49.

<sup>108</sup> NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

petitioners who intervened for the reform of this house included some of the core court figures we have already met – Gerberga, Archbishop Artold of Rheims, Count Rainald of Roucy and Abbot Hincmar of St-Remi – as well as others we haven't (Guy bishop of Soissons, Gibuin bishop of Chalons and Count Adalbert of Vermandois)<sup>109</sup>. The initial request is said, however, to have come from the nobleman Eilbert and his wife Hersind. This pair were major players in the local monastic landscape, having founded several houses in the mid-940s, including St-Michel-en-Thiérache, Waulsort and Bucilly. In 949 Eilbert held Homblières as a benefice from Adalbert of Vermandois, who had recently been reconciled with Louis after a period of opposition<sup>110</sup>. Eilbert, a descendant of a vassal of the emperor Lothar I (840-55) did not hold high office but was a wealthy landholder of some note<sup>111</sup>. His wife Hersind was, if anything, even more prominent, thanks to her role in the foundation of the reformed nunnery of Bouxières-aux-Dames, situated between Toul and Metz. Already at the time of the house's foundation in the early 930s, the recently-widowed Hersind seems to have been collaborating with Bishop Gauzlin of Toul, who was also involved in the establishment of Bouxières and was later buried there<sup>112</sup>. Odelric, the sometime abbot of Remiremont we met in the context of Louis's court circle in 952, seems to have had a similar abbatial role at Bouxières, which is not surprising in view of the fact that Hersind was probably his paternal grandmother; his mother Eva was buried at the house, and is identified in a Metz charter as a blood-relative of Bishop Adalbero<sup>113</sup>. Finally, Folmar, the *fidelis* of Adalbero we met earlier, was probably the same Folmar who witnessed Hersind's original grant to Bouxières<sup>114</sup>. The political world of the Lotharingian reform was, in short, a small one, and their patronage of Homblières (the first house whose reform they sponsored) suggests that one of Louis' and Gerberga's aims was to cultivate the influential political networks which supported it.

In this context we should also register the fact that the monastic professionals used to carry out the nuts and bolts of these reforms were trusted allies from the royal centre at Rheims. Abbot Hincmar of St-Remi in Rheims was closely involved in the reforms at St-Basle at Verzy (where he took up an abbatial position) and Homblières (whose nuns were replaced by monks from St-Remi)<sup>115</sup>. Rheims was a safe harbour for Louis, and here too we find Gerberga's fingerprints everywhere. Aside from her already-mentioned involvement with Rheims monks in the reforms at Homblières and

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<sup>109</sup> LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, no. 32; EVERGATES, CONSTABLE and NEWMAN, eds., *Cartulary*, *op. cit.*, no. 2. No. 1, an earlier royal charter for the nunnery, is rightly regarded as suspect. On Hincmar see also below. Gerberga clearly retained an interest in Homblières after her husband's death: see EVERGATES, CONSTABLE and NEWMAN, eds., *Cartulary*, *op. cit.*, no. 8.

<sup>110</sup> EVERGATES, CONSTABLE and NEWMAN, eds., *Cartulary*, *op. cit.*, p. 3-6.

<sup>111</sup> Daniel MISONNE, *Eilbert de Florennes*, Louvain, Publications universitaires de Louvain, 1967. DIERKENS, *Abbayes et chapitres*, *op. cit.*, p. 174-187 separates fact from fiction in the evidence for this figure.

<sup>112</sup> NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, p. 132-133, 149-50. Hersind was the house's first donor. If, as Nightingale surmises, Hersind entered the nunnery at the time of her original donation, she had either re-married by 949 or our Hersind was her daughter (for present purposes it does not much matter which).

<sup>113</sup> NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, p. 150-152.

<sup>114</sup> NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

<sup>115</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, s.a. 952, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, p. 134; EVERGATES, CONSTABLE and NEWMAN, eds., *Cartulary*, *op. cit.*, p. 2; NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, p. 143 and n. 34.

St-Basle we have a charter of Lothar from 955 which reports that Gerberga “revered and esteemed” St-Remi “above all other places”, and in accordance with these sentiments had consented, while her husband lived, to the monks receiving the estate of Corbeny, a queenly possession that she had probably acquired in succession to her mother-in-law Eadgifu<sup>116</sup>. In 954 she saw to the burial of Louis at the monastery; and after her own death and burial at his side the composer of her epitaph made much of her special devotion to St Remigius<sup>117</sup>.

Behind the patterns of charter-giving and intervention we have observed may, in other words, lie a more or less coherent royal strategy for cementing a resurgent Louis’ alliances with the aristocracies of West Francia. Yet Gerberga was never simply the wife of the West Frankish king: it was her tripartite political identity as queen, royal sister and ducal widow that underpinned the activities we have been considering and made her such a formidable figure in mid-tenth century politics. That she lived out these identities simultaneously and to the end of her life is strongly suggested by her final recorded act, a charter enacted in February of the year 968<sup>118</sup>. This document commemorates Gerberga’s grant of her property at Meerssen to the church of St-Remi, where Louis’s body lay. Meerssen was probably part of the wedding dowry she had received in 928 from Henry I, and her brother Otto’s consent to the gift was also recorded<sup>119</sup>. Yet the grant was made for the soul of Giselbert, witnessed by many of the *dux*’s former friends, and enacted in the symbolic setting of Echt, a former ducal estate and site of a church that Gerberga had previously granted to St-Servatius in Maastricht, the church at the heart of Giselbert’s power and the location of his tomb<sup>120</sup>. Gerberga’s Lotharingian-ness thus remained a living part of her identity even as she made plans to enrich the abbey where Louis was buried, and where she would soon be interred herself. Her ongoing attachment to and involvement in the affairs of the middle kingdom were crucial to her ability to influence the patronage politics and political networks around the West Frankish king from the late 940s. If modern historians have tended to overlook this dimension of her identity, contemporaries like the Lotharingian chronicler Adalbert of Magdeburg, who in the late 960s chose to refer to her as “Giselbert’s widow” rather than “Otto’s sister”, did not<sup>121</sup>.

## 5. Who wrote Adso’s “Letter”?

<sup>116</sup> HALPHEN and LOT, eds., *Recueil des actes de Lothaire*, *op. cit.*, no. 4 (= LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, no. 47). On Corbeny as a queenly estate see MACLEAN, “Making a Difference”, *op. cit.*.

<sup>117</sup> RICHER, *Historiae*, ed. Hartmut HOFFMANN, MGH SS 38, Hanover, 2000, III.110, p. 231 for her burial. On her epitaph and tomb, discovered in the nineteenth century, see Alain ERLANDE-BRANDENBURG, *Le roi est mort. Étude sur les funérailles, les sépultures et les tombeaux des rois de France jusqu’à la fin du XIIIe siècle*, Geneva, Droz, 1975, p. 37, 61-63, 156.

<sup>118</sup> Ed. Claire BERNARD, “Étude sur le diplôme de 968, par lequel Gerberge, veuve de Louis IV d’Outremer donne à Saint-Remi de Reims son domaine de Meerssen”, in *Bulletin de la commission royale d’histoire*, vol. 123, 1958, p. 191-224 at p. 220-224.

<sup>119</sup> DIERKENS and MARGUE, “*Memoria*”, *op. cit.*, p. 889.

<sup>120</sup> DIERKENS and MARGUE, “*Memoria*”, *op. cit.*, p. 881-884, 887-890.

<sup>121</sup> ADALBERT, *Continuatio Reginonis*, ed. KURZE, *op. cit.*, s.a. 939, p. 161. Adalbert’s Lotharingian credentials – he was a former monk of St-Maximin at Trier – are discussed by NIGHTINGALE, *Monasteries and their Patrons*, *op. cit.*, p. 211-212, 224.

The foregoing reconstruction of the reforming circles surrounding the queen in the years either side of 950 can, I suggest, serve as the best context for understanding the reform-inflected rhetoric of Adso's "Letter" and supports the theory that Gerberga's interest in the Antichrist was partly primed by her interest in monastic patronage. Our final task is to establish where Adso himself fits into the picture. Here we will need to move onto rather shakier evidential ground. What follows necessarily depends more than what precedes on informed speculation, and is therefore offered as no more than a plausible hypothesis. The traditional account of Adso's career has him born around 910-20; becoming a teacher at Toul in the early 930s; being despatched to push through the reform of Montier-en-Der in 935; writing his "Letter" in 949-54; becoming abbot of Der in 968; and dying on pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 992. While Adso's post-968 career, during which he was also active as a hagiographer, is well-documented and can be described with some certainty, Monique Gouillet has recently drawn attention to fundamental problems with the accepted reconstruction of his earlier life<sup>122</sup>. As she points out, the chronology seems rather stretched: if one places his birth near 910 then he would have been remarkably old to have undertaken a Jerusalem pilgrimage in 992; whereas if we hypothesise that he was born closer to 920, it is difficult to account for his status as a trusted teacher at Toul by the early 930s<sup>123</sup>. Whichever side we err on (youthful precocity or elderly vigour), and even if we allow for both, it remains difficult to account for the long silences in such an evidently starry career: why, if he was so highly thought of in 935, did it take Adso another 33 years to gain an abbacy?

As Gouillet emphasises, the problem may in fact lie in our main narrative source for Adso's career, an eleventh-century continuation of his "Life of Bercharius" (a saint culted at Montier-en-Der) known as *De diversis casibus*<sup>124</sup>. This text has been vindicated in the eyes of historians by virtue of its agreement with independent sources: for example, its account of Adso's journey from Toul to Montier-en-Der in 935 appears to be substantiated by a contemporary charter from the latter house that refers to the presence of both Adso and his supposed companion, Alberic<sup>125</sup>. Yet since in all likelihood the author of *De diversibus casibus* also knew this charter and used it to elaborate his narrative, it would be circular to invoke it as an independent witness to Adso's journey<sup>126</sup>. The name Adso, an abbreviated form of names like Adalbert and Adalbero, was quite common in this period, and it is very likely that the Adso of the 935 charter and the future abbot of Der were simply different men<sup>127</sup>. The negative implications of this observation for conventional understandings of Adso's career are fairly serious, for they cast his pre-968 activities back into obscurity

<sup>122</sup> Monique GOULLET, *Adso Dervenensis Opera Hagiographica*, CCCM 198, Turnhout, Brepols, 2003, p. vii-xxvi; Monique GOULLET, "Adson hagiographe", in CORBET, ed., *Les moines du Der*, *op. cit.*, p. 103-134 at p. 103-106.

<sup>123</sup> These problems were first raised by Daniel VERHELST, "Adson de Montier-en-Der", in Dominique IOGNA-PRAT and Jean-Charles PICARD, eds., *Religion et culture autour de l'an mil: Royaume capétien et Lotharingie*, Paris, Picard, 1990, p. 25-30, at p. 29. WERNER, "Der Autor", *op. cit.*, p. 539-546 restated the case for the long chronology.

<sup>124</sup> Ed. Jean MABILLON, *Acta Sanctorum Ordinis sancti Benedicti*, Paris, L. Billaine, 1668, II, p. 844-861; relevant excerpts in GOULLET, *Adso Dervenensis*, *op. cit.*, p. lxiv-lxviii and (in partial French translation) GOULLET, "Adson hagiographe", *op. cit.*, p. 129-131.

<sup>125</sup> Constance BOUCHARD, ed., *The Cartulary of Montier-en-Der, 666-1129*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2004, no. 39.

<sup>126</sup> GOULLET, *Adso Dervenensis*, *op. cit.*, p. xii-xv.

<sup>127</sup> WERNER, "Der Autor", *op. cit.*, p. 535-537; GOULLET, *Adso Dervenensis*, *op. cit.*, p. ix-x; GOULLET, "Adson hagiographe", *op. cit.*, p. 104-105.

and make it impossible for us to substantiate the involvement in monastic reform attributed to him by the narrative of *De diversibus casibus*<sup>128</sup>.

Gouillet's solution to this problem is to propose a foreshortened chronology of Adso's career in which he is hypothesised to have been born at some point in the 930s and so to have become abbot of Montier-en-Der in his mid-30s<sup>129</sup>. This is extremely plausible, and if we accept the claim of *De diversibus* that he was a teacher at Toul, then we could place him at the side of Bishop Gauzlin around 950, and hence in the political circles surrounding the West Frankish court at the time Gerberga requested the "Letter". Yet this would still require us to believe that the "Letter" was the work of a very young man, most likely still a teenager; and leaves us reliant for Adso's Toul connection on a very late source whose author's reconstruction of his subject's early career rested, as we have seen, on some fairly ropery prosopography.

In view of these deconstructive efforts, we should at least consider the hitherto overlooked possibility that another Adso was responsible for the letter to Gerberga. The conventional attribution goes back to André Duchesne's discovery of the treatise's prologue in 1636 and rests mainly on the fact that the abbot of Montier-en-Der is known to have been a scholar and author after 968. Indeed, he was virtually the only contemporary author of his era and region whose name and reputation have survived, so has had a number of works falsely attributed to him<sup>130</sup>. *De diversibus casibus* gives a list of Adso's works but does not mention the "Letter", a striking omission given the treatise's fame. Nothing in the text itself necessarily confirms the traditional identification. The author of the "Letter" identifies himself only as "Adso", *monachus* ("monk") and *frater* ("brother"), beyond which he implies that he was already close to the queen ("since I have won the favour of your kindness") and that he was an admirer of, and perhaps familiar with, Rorico<sup>131</sup>. Very broad similarities between the formal clichés found in the "Letter" and in the prologues to Adso's hagiographies are far too general and commonplace (for example, protestations of humility) to serve as decisive evidence of common authorship<sup>132</sup>.

We may gain some further insight if we accept Karl Ferdinand Werner's arguments that the author of the "Letter" and the anonymous "Life of Clothild" were both written by the same person (in his view, Adso of Montier-en-Der). Pointing to resonances between the "Life" and aspects of Gerberga's career (in particular the idealisation of widowhood, the fact that the matter of Clothar's succession to Clovis corresponds neatly with Lothar's to Louis IV, and the queen's strong associations with Rheims, where the text was likely written), Werner makes a case for the queen as recipient; while verbal and conceptual similarities between "Life" and "Letter" led him to the plausible conclusion that they shared an author<sup>133</sup>. Gouillet, while not contesting the idea that Gerberga might have been the work's intended recipient, has pointed to

<sup>128</sup> GOULLET, *Adso Dervenensis*, *op. cit.*, p. xx-xxiv.

<sup>129</sup> GOULLET, *Adso Dervenensis*, *op. cit.*, p. xxiv-xxvi.

<sup>130</sup> ADSO, *De ortu*, ed. VERHELST, *op. cit.*, p. 4; GOULLET, *Adso Dervenensis*, *op. cit.*, p. xxxviii; GOULLET, "Adson hagiographe", *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>131</sup> ADSO, *De ortu*, ed. VERHELST, *op. cit.*, p. 20-21.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. GOULLET, "Adson hagiographe", *op. cit.*, p. 113, 132-134. The letter's brevity and genre further complicate such a comparison. ADSO, *De ortu*, ed. VERHELST, *op. cit.*, p. 21, 26 identifies verbal parallels between the "Letter" and Adso of Montier-en-Der's hagiographies, but the resemblances are very loose.

<sup>133</sup> WERNER, "Der Autor", *op. cit.*



important discrepancies between the techniques employed in the “Life” and the various hagiographies whose attribution to Adso of Montier-en-Der is secure and shown definitively that the latter was not the author of the “Life”<sup>134</sup>. Yet the positions of Werner and Goulet could be partially reconciled were we to hypothesise that the “Letter” and the “Life” were indeed written by the same person; but that that person was not Adso of Montier-en-Der.

There was, in fact, another contemporary Adso who might fit the sketchy profile we have for such a figure, in other words a monk with Rheims connections who had a close association with the queen. This Adso was abbot of St-Basle at Verzy (near Rheims) in the period c. 970 – c. 991, and therefore a rough contemporary of the abbot of Montier-en-Der, who wrote his epitaph. According to *De diversibus*, it was Adso of Verzy, *praeclarissimus vir* (“very notable man”), who along with Archbishop Gerbert of Rheims invited his namesake to compose the “Life of St Basle”<sup>135</sup>. This man left few footprints in the written record but in the years of his abbacy must have been a significant figure, since he was a participant in the major reforming council of Mont-Notre-Dame in 972, and probably played host in 991 to the highly political Synod of St-Basle at which Archbishop Arnulf of Rheims was deposed<sup>136</sup>. His pre-abbatial career is obscure, but it is likely that he was a monk in the community of St-Basle before his elevation (such was a typical career pattern for tenth-century abbots), and may even have been one of the brothers shipped in from Rheims when Hincmar of St-Remi was placed in charge of the community in 952 and the existing “clerics” were turfed out<sup>137</sup>. The St-Remi connection should be kept in mind when considering a poem written (probably in the 950s or 960s) by a certain *Adso philosophus* which was recorded in a now-lost manuscript from that monastery. The text, a short versified paraphrase of a passage from Isidore of Seville’s “Etymologies”, identifies the Adso in question as an acquaintance of Abbo of Fleury and a monk called Richer, and implies that the three were in the habit of writing intellectual riddles for each other<sup>138</sup>. Richer, presumed to be the late-tenth-century Rheims historian, was a monk of St-Remi and son of a warrior (*miles*) who served Louis IV and Gerberga; while Abbo, the famous late-tenth-century reformer and intellectual, trained at Rheims before becoming a teacher at Fleury in 965. In view of these Remigian collections, it is surely more likely that “Adso the philosopher” was the “very notable” future abbot of St-Basle rather than the future abbot of Montier-en-Der who had no known links to Rheims at this stage<sup>139</sup>.

<sup>134</sup> GOULLET, “Adson hagiographe”, *op. cit.*, p. 110-113; GOULLET, *Adso Dervenensis, op. cit.*, p. xlix-l.

<sup>135</sup> Gerbert may not yet have been archbishop. Sources and discussion: GOULLET, *Adso Dervenensis, op. cit.*, p. xxiii, xxxvi-xxxviii, lxvi, 187, 197-200.

<sup>136</sup> On the 991 synod see GLENN, *Politics and History, op. cit.*, p. 276-284.

<sup>137</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, s.a. 952, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, p. 134; BUR, “Saint-Thierry”, *op. cit.*, p. 39-41. VERHELST, “Adson”, *op. cit.*, p. 29 speculates that Adso of Verzy had been a monk at Montier-en-Der.

<sup>138</sup> Text and discussion: GOULLET, *Adso Dervenensis, op. cit.*, p. xxviii-xxx; GLENN, *Politics and History, op. cit.*, p. 68, 274-275.

<sup>139</sup> *De diversis casibus* c. 11 (GOULLET, *Adso Dervenensis, op. cit.*, p. lxvi) claims that Adso and Abbo were close friends, but only in a passage describing the 990s, and in any case placing Adso of Verzy in the same circle. RICHER, *Historiae*, ed. HOFFMANN, *op. cit.*, IV.57, p. 200 mentions Adso of Montier-en-Der, but nothing in his passing reference suggests the two men were particularly close or even acquainted

This argument is circumstantial, to be sure, but the already-mentioned Remigian imprint of the “Life” is a slender thread that draws us towards Adso of St-Basle as a possible author of both that work and the “Letter”. St-Basle was intimately connected to the archbishopric of Rheims. Archbishop Artold had been ceded the monastery in 940 as a pension after being evicted from his see, and thereafter treated it as something like a headquarters<sup>140</sup>. Artold was a close ally of the royal couple, having consecrated Louis in 936 and Gerberga in 939; the latter event was still a living memory in 948, when the archbishop recalled it in the pamphlet he produced to boost his claims to his see prior to the Synod of Ingelheim<sup>141</sup>. In this context we should remember the emphasis in the “Life” on the importance of Rheims as a centre of royal consecration and Gerberga’s own reported predilection for the town and its religious centres<sup>142</sup>. In 952 the reform of St-Basle and the appointment of Hincmar of St-Remi as co-abbot were undertaken at Artold’s instigation. Yet the archbishop did not act alone: as we have seen, the reform was authorised by Louis in the presence of Gerberga<sup>143</sup>. The sources’ reference to her involvement is beyond the conventional, and suggests she had some special interest or agency in the process. At St-Basle, then, we find a close circumstantial link between the queen and the monk and “philosopher” Adso which closes the circle we have been sketching, leaving Adso of Montier-en-Der, with no known Rheims context, outside.

## 6. Conclusion

On the evidence available, the case for ascribing the “Letter” to Adso of St-Basle is at the very least no weaker than the case for giving it to Adso of Montier-en-Der. However, this article’s main argument does not depend on either attribution, for in truth both men could comfortably have fitted into the concentric circles of influence surrounding the West Frankish court around the year 950. Whatever the identity of the treatise’s author, it is in the constellation of reformers surrounding the royal court in the period 949-54 that we find the best explanation for Gerberga’s interest in the Antichrist. The “Letter” refracts the self-identity of this new court circle, which was populated by contacts of the queen from her days as Giselbert’s wife, and whose appearance must be connected to her own increasing influence with Louis IV and her personal investment in monastic reform at the end of the 940s. The Lotharingian reformers were accustomed to characterising their enemies as “antichrists”, and it is primarily in this context that Adso’s treatise is to be understood. As Bernard McGinn points out: “In apocalypticism, historical events form the necessary mediating link between the mythic beginning and the legendary (that is, parahistorical) end<sup>144</sup>.” The Antichrist tradition was always, in other words, anchored in historical/political polemic, and necessarily responded to contemporary circumstances. Adso’s own references to Antiochus, Nero and Domitian represent fossilized early strata of this interaction, and his insinuations about Antichrist(s) as the enemies of “proper” Benedictine monasticism can be regarded as its latest manifestation. The

<sup>140</sup> FLODOARD, *Annales*, s.a. 940, 941, 943, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, p. 77, 82, 87; FLODOARD, *Historia*, ed. STRATMANN, *op. cit.*, IV.28, p. 419-420.

<sup>141</sup> FLODOARD, *Historia*, ed. STRATMANN, *op. cit.*, IV.35, p. 430.

<sup>142</sup> See above, at nn. 116-117.

<sup>143</sup> LAUER, ed., *Recueil des actes de Louis IV*, *op. cit.*, no. 53; cf. HALPHEN and LOT, eds., *Recueil des actes de Lothaire*, *op. cit.*, no. 3; FLODOARD, *Annales*, ed. LAUER, *op. cit.*, s.a. 952, p. 134.

<sup>144</sup> MCGINN, *Antichrist*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

personification of Antichrist, Adso's great innovation, may have been intended to heighten the polemical impact of this rhetorical strategy. In condemning their enemies as antichrists, the reformers gave voice to an identity that helped define them as a group: in this sense we can read the "Letter" as part of a self-affirming discourse used by a coterie of reformists whose influence at the West Frankish court was new and therefore required definition. Simultaneously, the traditional eschatological overtones of Frankish imperial ideologies made it possible for Adso to use the tract to flatter Gerberga and highlight her dynastic significance.

Can we, though, make the jump from political rhetoric to genuine anxiety, and even to widespread fear? Clearly there is a link between eschatological ideology and apocalyptic anxiety, but is the correlation direct, as many historians have assumed? This article has suggested that we err on the side of caution and that we should hesitate before translating the ubiquitous daily consciousness of ultimate judgement implicit in medieval Christianity into a widespread millennial apprehension that the end times were at hand, particularly as the chasm between monastic and lay elite understandings of eschatological ideology seems not, on the evidence of Adso's "Letter", to have been as gaping as some have proposed. Ultimately, though, we cannot know what kept tenth-century Franks awake at night, and it would be a mistake to sieve all the anxiety out of the period. Even if it was "only" a discourse, and even if the last six years of Louis IV's reign were relatively stable, we have to keep in mind that the antichrist-rhetoric we have detected in Gerberga's circle emerged from real political tensions, between "monks" and "clerics", Carolingians and Ottonians, kings and dukes, and Franks and Magyars, and so can simultaneously be read as part of an attempt to rationalise present events and locate them in God's future plans for his creation. Educated laypeople like Gerberga, surrounded by spiritual advisers and seemingly schooled in the study of Scripture, surely did harbour anxieties about sin, salvation and the fate of their souls, and without doubt wondered about the last days and the role therein of figures like the Antichrist.

But equally, we have to be very careful about jumping on Adso's treatise as decisive evidence for mounting apocalyptic expectation in the course of the tenth century. Antichrist scholarship was not simply a predictive science but part of a highly flexible eschatological discourse whose evocative imagery helped shape dynastic ideology, personal spirituality and Christian didacticism alike. The point can be underlined by reference to one of Adso's predecessors, the ninth-century intellectual Agobard, bishop of Lyons (816-40), who in a polemic on "Jewish superstitions" identified all Jews as antichrists and advised Emperor Louis the Pious that in view of this someone should be commissioned to "collect everything which the Church's teachers have understood, explained or signified concerning Antichrist in the sacred Scriptures<sup>145</sup>." For Agobard read Adso, for Jews read unreformed monks and their patrons, and for anti-semitism read political posturing. But did Agobard, Adso or, more to the point, Gerberga really think the world was about to end? I doubt it; but when it does, perhaps we will get a chance to ask them.

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<sup>145</sup> AGOBARD, *De Iudaicis superstitionibus*, ed. Lieven VAN ACKER, *Opera omnia Agobardi Lugdunensis*, CCCM 52, Turnhout, Brepols, 1981, c. 27, p. 221; trans. MCGINN, *Antichrist, op. cit.*, p. 304.