Heresy and the Antichrist in the Writings of Ademar of Chabannes*

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Introduction

In his chronicle the Aquitanian monk of the early eleventh century Ademar of Chabannes wrote, “Shortly thereafter [ca. 1018] Manichaeans arose throughout Aquitaine, seducing the people…They were messengers of Antichrist, and made many deviate from the faith.”¹ These words provide exceptionally early information on the rise of heresy in the medieval West at the turn of the millennium.² Noting that he was the first to use the term Manichaeans to

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designate these heretics, scholars have scrutinized the statement and several other references in the same chronicle, without attending to other writings of Ademar, most unpublished, in which he furnishes additional information about heresy in general and these heretics in particular. Here I shall begin by examining a number of these additional references, particularly in his unpublished sermons, in order to determine who he thought these heretics were and what they professed. Then I shall attempt to demonstrate that the connection between the “Manichaeans” and Antichrist Ademar draws in the chronicle was a central element in his writings and reflected his keen sense of the proximity of the Apocalypse and the Last Judgment.

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4 This article is one of seven studies on Ademar’s millennial and apocalyptic expectations. The first, “Adémar de Chabannes, Apocalypticism and the Peace Council of Limoges of 1031,” *Revue Bénédicte*, 101 (1991), 32–49, examines Ademar’s account of this council and sets the piece into the eschatological orientation of B.N., Ms. Lat. 2469, the manuscript in which it is found. The second article, “The Problem of the ‘Filioque’ and the Letter from the Pilgrim Monks of the Mount of Olives to Pope Leo III and Charlemagne: Is the Letter Another Forgery by Adémar of Chabannes?,” *Revue Bénédicte*, 102 (1992), 75–134, seeks to show the letter was prepared by Ademar shortly before his departure for Jerusalem in 1032–33 and sets the piece into the apocalyptic context of the manuscript in which it was found, D.S., Ms. Lat. 1664. A third, entitled “Ademar of Chabannes, Millennial Fears and the Development of Western Anti-Judaism,” appears in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 46, 1 (1995), 19–35. Another, which examines the *familia* of St. Martial of Limoges and his apostolic throne at the Last Judgment, is part of a memorial volume for David Herlihy and is entitled “When Heaven Came down to Earth: The Family of St. Martial of Limoges and the “Terrors of the Year 1000,”