

# **Apocalyptic Spirituality in the Old and New Worlds: The Revisioning of History and Matter**

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As we near the end of the second millennium in the Christian calendar there is both a resurgence of apocalyptic eschatology or a sense of revealed thought about a catastrophic end of time, as well as increased reflection on the diversity of ritual calendars and cultural perceptions of time that have been used to motivate people and to explain the difficulties of life. This paper, prepared in this year of the quincentennial of the Columbian Encounter, is an exploration in comparative eschatology as a way of "seeing" which is also a revisioning of history and matter. It seeks to describe apocalyptic modes in both Mediterranean-Atlantic and MesoAmerican traditions as a means of understanding cultural attitudes towards time and material substance. In describing spiritual disciplines which accompanied these cultural statements an ideological interpretation of apocalyptic thought is identified in both the Atlantic-Mediterranean and MesoAmerican contexts. That is, apocalyptic thought, or revelation of a "new world," has been used among both Old and New World peoples as a means of revisioning historical events so that they conform to spiritual visions engendering religious meaning and confirm dominant ideologies. That these developments are presented here using the term "apocalyptic eschatologies" in both the biblical and indigenous American spheres is problematic and limited. Still I feel the phrase is useful to indicate the radical revisioning of time and matter which occurred in both contexts. Thus, religious ideologies, which imaged "new worlds" in response to oppressive conditions, played crucial roles in the European invasion into the plural societies of North America. Moreover, the apocalyptic spiritualities which were operative in both the invading European and the indigenous American contexts encountered each other but, as we shall see, did not understand each other.

What are these various issues concerned with the end of time and with the diverse cultural cosmologies used to explain time? What manner of