

Fifth Millennium Evening
The White House
January 25, 1999

1

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 25, 1999

FIFTH MILLENNIUM EVENING AT THE WHITE HOUSE

Remarks by the President, the First Lady,
Professor Natalie Davis and Professor Martin Marty

The East Room

7:37 P.M. EST

MRS. CLINTON: Good evening. Please be seated, and welcome to the White House. But also, welcome to the world, as it was seen by people 1,000 years ago. They envisioned everything pointing toward the East, for that is where the Garden of Eden could be found. They saw the holy city of Jerusalem at the very center of the world.

Now, as the map turns, Europe is shown as a large land with well-known contours. But they picture the unknown -- Africa and Asia -- not only as incomplete masses, but plagued with two-headed creatures and valleys full of devils.

And then there were miscellaneous places it seems they weren't quite sure what to do with, so they spread them out as islands and stuck them in the dark sea. Ireland, or as it was called then, Scotia, even ended up off the coast of France somewhere. And of course, the New World was still nowhere to be found.

How we draw our world depends upon how we imagine it. Think about how differently we imagine it today. Tonight's Fifth Millennium Evening at the White House will explore the meaning of the millennium -- both the last one and the one about to arrive. With the calendar recently flipping to 1999, there's already been a lot of talk about the millennium, most of it centering on how do we spell it? (Laughter.) How will we celebrate it? Where will the biggest New Year's Eve party be? What is a 2YK bug and does it have anything to do with the apocalypse? And will there be enough champagne to go around?

But tonight we wanted to take a minute and go beyond some of these questions and topics to others -- fundamental ones about how we can find meaning in this time and all time. How did people live 1,000 years ago? Did they approach that time with fear or optimism? What is our millennial thinking today? Do we see the millennium as an end, a beginning, both, or just

another day? How do we use this unique milestone to help us understand our past and prepare for the future, or in the words of the Millennium Council theme, to honor the past and imagine the future?

As we answer these questions and pose new ones, we are very fortunate to have two extraordinary guides, Natalie Zemon Davis and Martin Marty. I want to thank everyone who has helped make this evening possible, especially our sponsors, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Howard Gilman Foundation, and all of Sun Microsystems, especially John Leahy, who are responsible for the technology that is bringing this event to millions around the world via satellite and the Internet.

Many people are responsible for the wonderful sights and sounds that are accompanying us on this journey. I want to thank the Library of Congress for bringing the displays that I hope you've seen, and if not, I hope you will see out in the Grand Foyer. The White House curators provided the historic clocks that have through the ages helped the residents of this house keep track of time. I want thank Walter Art Gallery and NASA for providing the video images that are used in this evenings program. And I want to thank Ex Umbris for the music that so beautifully set the medieval mood here in the East Room.

And fast forwarding into the future, I want thank the team at Pioneer New Media Technology. They provided these plasma screens you see on both sides of the stage -- the latest technology to display high-definition television.

The White House Millennium Lecture is part of an ongoing series designed to spotlight the words, ideas, scholarship, science, creativity and innovation that tell the story of who we are as Americans, and who we want to be.

Professor Bernard Bailyn kicked off the series by exploring the origins and ideals of our Republic. Stephen Hawking uncovered the possibilities of science in the 21st century. Our poets laureate celebrated the words that unite and define us. And Wynton Marsalis helped us hear jazz as an expression of American democracy.

In each case, it seemed that we were hosting the largest numbers of historians, physicists, poets and jazz musicians ever at the White House. Tonight we continue that tradition. I think it is safe to say that we have, in the East Room, the largest gathering of medievalists and theologians ever to assemble at the White House. (Laughter.)

These evenings are part of the White House Millennium Program that the President and I created two years ago. We knew that the turn of the century would mean great New Year's Eve parties, and that there would be products like millennium toothpaste or potato chips. But we thought we had an opportunity not just for a celebration, but a conversation -- about the history, culture, art, the values that bind us together and will stay with us into the future.

And so what you're going to do tonight is to honor the past and imagine the future. Because as the Roman playwright Terence said, nothing human is alien to me.

If we were transported back in time, that's quite a bit that would look familiar to us. You would see university students asking their parents to send more money; children praying -- not for world peace, but for school to be canceled; parents desperate to find babysitters for their children; people laughing and loving, living and dying, as they always have and as we do still today. If we were transported back in time, we'd see some of our first town planners, property developers and shoemakers who helped shape the world we inherited. We'd see the contributions of all cultures, all people -- women and men -- whose stories weave together our past.

And if we were transported back to the Middle Ages, we'd see a very different way of measuring and accounting for time. There were no birthdays -- which, as I get older, sounds like a blessing. No one kept track of how old you were. Time was slower; people traveled by cart, foot, ship. They could spend two whole years on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. And, of course, there were no telephones, e-mail or beepers to interrupt them along the way -- something all of us have longed for from time to time -- the ability, literally, to stop the clock and look more carefully around; something that we can try to incorporate in our lives today.

Because even as we look at how we count time, we know that our challenge is to make time count -- which is not a job for computers or clocks, but, rather, for human beings. Just as there were those who preached the end of the world at the last millennium, we have no shortage of negative images from popular culture today. Most of the movies about the future show aliens descending from outer space determined to blow up the world, and somehow they always begin or end with Washington, D.C. (Laughter.)

But just as there were people preaching peace and unity and hope 1,000 years ago, we, too, have our opportunity to create a positive image of our future, so that 1,000 years from now, when scholars are on this stage, or maybe levitating above it, they will not only shake their heads and wonder how we got anything done with our quaint satellite and Internet technology, but they'll also relate to us as human beings. They'll talk about how we paused to mark this moment, and we found a way to preserve hope for the future and create a world that was better for our children to inherit.

Just as those who drew the map that you see on the screens, we all have a way of drawing our own maps from day to day, showing our own lives. And we have two people here who can help us better understand how to draw that map. Professor Davis and Professor Marty were born in the same year -- it must have been a very good year for curiosity and scholarship. Both share a generosity of spirit, a love of family and the traditions that shape them, and a passion for teaching and living and learning.

When we think of Natalie Zemon Davis we can imagine her with her bookbag riding her bicycle all over campus, whatever campus -- Smith and Radcliffe Colleges, Brown University,

UC Berkeley, and for 18 years at Princeton. Currently she's a visiting scholar at the University of Toronto, where she taught her class this morning before running to the airport.

While her academic specialty is the history of early France, her broad interests have led her to spotlight the lives of Jews, of women and ordinary people whose stories too often go untold. She is perhaps best known for her work, "The Return of Martin Gere," and the french film of the same name that she collaborated on.

Tonight she will bring us back to the year 1000 and once again tell the stories of the diverse cultural and political strands that wove together across Europe and created the world that we recognize today. It is my great honor to introduce Professor Natalie Zemon Davis, who will speak to us about the millennium and historical hope.

Professor Davis. (Applause.)

PROFESSOR DAVIS: Thank you, Mrs. Clinton, for your remarks and your gracious introduction. And thank you both, Mr. President and the First Lady, for including me, along with Martin Marty, in this evening of exploration, of voices of the past, and our hopes for the future.

Listen to the words of a good French abbot, reminiscing in 998 about his youth, some 20 years before: "About the end of the world, I heard someone preaching to the people in Paris Church that the Antichrist would come in the year 1000, and the Last Judgment would follow soon afterward. I fought this opinion strongly, basing myself on the Gospels."

And hear the voice of another monk, Rudolphus Glauber, on what he'd seen in the year 1033: "The thousandth year after the Passion of our Lord, after the disastrous famine, the rain stopped, and the heavens began to smile, showing the generosity of the Creator. The land was covered with lovely green and an abundance of fruit."

Both these witnesses undermine the false image of Western Christians all quaking in terror during the year 1000. The millennial prophecy had been put together from Jesus' promise, in Matthew 6, that "the Son of Man shall come again in his kingdom," and apocalyptic visions of the Book of Revelation, that "Satan will be loosened after a thousand years, that his forces of evil will war with the forces of heaven and be defeated," and that "all those who have not worshiped the Beast will reign with Christ for a thousand years."

Over the centuries, some Christians had expected the Second Coming any time, while some Christians -- such as the Great Augustan, himself, had insisted that the Book of Revelation was just an allegory, not a literal prophecy.

As the 10th century came to its close in Western Europe, there was still the same diversity of view. Many people didn't even know when the year 1000 was. For those who did know,

which was the significant date? The 1,000th anniversary of Christ's birth, the Incarnation, or of his Passion and crucifixion? And which of the many scenarios in Revelation would come to pass?

Thus, there was no clear cut apocalyptic movement led by a single prophet and focused on the single year 1000; but, rather, a millennial spirit spread over several decades. Preached by monks, it touched at one time or another bishops, nuns, warriors, wives, traders and peasants, inspiring moods that ranged from fear and repentance to initiative and joy. There were signs in the heavens -- a brilliant comet in 1014; eclipses in 1023 and 1033, when all the world was bathed in saffron. There were signs on Earth -- from 997, the spread of the deadly burning sickness, what we call ergotism.

In 1004, an immense whale washed up on the Atlantic shore of France -- what could that mean? In 1033, a famine in Burgundy so acute that people turned to eating human flesh. And in Jerusalem in 1009, the Holy Sepulcher of Jesus was destroyed at the order of the Kalif of Cairo; a weeping Christ on a cross was seen in the heavens, when the terrible news reached Limoges.

The monks interpreted these signs as the judgment of God, warning Christians of divine vengeance for their sins. They had much to be punished for -- destructive wars among the Franks and the Anglos and the Scots, and clergymen who bought their sacred offices and even had wives. The faithful responded in repentance. The wealthy and powerful confessed their sins and gave alms to the church, lands, new church buildings and golden cases for the precious relics of the saints. People took to the roads on pilgrimage to Rome, to Santiago, to Compostela, and to Jerusalem, where the Holy Sepulcher had been rebuilt.

No one had seen such crowds, Rudolphus Glauber wrote of Jerusalem, in the year 1033. First there were people of the lower classes, then the middling sort, then the great -- kings, counts, prelates -- and what had never happened before, many women -- from the most noble to the poorest.

Back home in France, Glauber spoke of another novelty in that wondrous verdant spring of 1033. Joyous crowds lifted their arms to the sky shouting, peace, peace, peace. Glauber was referring to the most important result of the millennial decades, the Peace of God movement, of which more in a moment.

Interestingly enough, and not coincidentally, historians today view the late 10th and early 11th centuries as a major moment in European history, comparable to the decline of the Roman Empire and the Industrial Revolution. What signs do they see? To start with, the periodic invasions of the Vikings from the North and the Hungarians from the East, which had been going on for 150 years, ceased or tapered off around 1000. The Vikings continued their adventurous sea voyages, but they stopped seizing European Christians to sell as slaves and became Christians themselves. Missionaries had success to report as well from Hungary,

Sweden, Finland and Poland. The Christian triune God was displacing the older deities of Europe.

Also being transformed was the status of men and women who tilled the soil, the majority of Europe's population. Previously they had been slaves working on the great estates, or else free peasants with their own land. Now, increasingly, they had the status of serfs, not as personally owned as if they had been slaves, but tied to someone's land and controlled by a lord nonetheless.

Their life expectancy was short. Most of them could not expect to pass the age of 40, if that. But by the early 11th century there are signs of agricultural improvements that could eventually support a larger population -- new lands under plow and new collars for oxen and horses.

At the same time a transformation was underway in the status of the land-owning families; that is, the emergence of what we call feudalism. The Emperor Charlemagne's successors from the 9th century on had been unable to sustain their armies and their judicial courts during the period of the invasions, and these governmental powers were being seized -- we might call it privatized -- and becoming part of the inheritance of the counts, and especially of the lesser officials. Land was grabbed as well, and not peacefully. Every warrior and his men tried to get a slice, and the ensuing violence was spectacular.

A poem about the knights, by a Jewish Rabbi in the Rhineland at the time, expresses a feeling shared by many Christians: "They have their fortresses on craggy peaks; they battle with the flashing sword, with gold and silver richly wrought; while we pray to Almighty God, who maketh wars to cease."

Towns and trade persisted, however, in Italy, along the Mediterranean and Europe's rivers, the Jewish communities being especially active here. Especially, too, there were important developments in cultural life. Oral culture, the predominant one, was rich in proverbs in the vernacular tongue, folk tales, legends, love songs, and poems. Warrior families listened to bards singing verses about Charlemagne's day. And up north, sagas of the Norsemen were being composed on subjects ranging from love, trade and exploration, to war.

Christian literature culture was in Latin, the language of the clergy, and it was slowly expanding as more people became enmeshed in reading texts together. The monasteries were the centers of this life, especially the newer reforming houses like Cluny, to which Rudolphus Glauber belonged.

Meanwhile, over in Saxony, the Convent of Gandersheim (phonetic) housed the noble nun, Roswitha -- playwright, poet, moralist and historian who, before she died in 1001, called herself a "strong voice for women."

This picture suggests to us the "this worldly" challenges for the millennial spirit, and the resources societies had to respond to them. The millennial response was a double one. Most important was the Peace of God, a movement of clergy and people to limit the violence of the Christian feudal lords.

Starting in 975, and multiplying in the decades to 1040, large assemblies were called by bishops all over France, supported by the Monks of Cluny to which the people -- that is, free traders and free peasants, along with the knights -- came in large numbers. Holy relics were brought as well -- the medieval way of attracting a big crowd.

The knights present swore on these relics to maintain the peace and not engage in private violence. After 989, they were threatened with excommunication if they broke their oath. Here is what the oath sounded like: I will not invade a church under any circumstance; nor will I invade the wine cellars belonging to a church -- (laughter) -- unless an evildoer or murderer has taken refuge there. (Laughter.) I will not seize the cow or the pig of the peasant. I will not seize the peasant woman or peasant man or the merchant. I will not burn down or demolish houses, unless I discover an enemy knight or a thief inside. I will not attack noblewomen or their entourage, unless they commit some misdeed against me. From the beginning of Lent until Easter, I will not attack another knight if he's unarmed. (Laughter.) It goes on for much longer.

This is the movement that led the people to cry, "peace, peace, peace," to God in 1033. And it had some effect, influencing the policy of the French king and the emperor in Germanic lands, and setting some standards for the behavior of feudal lords. It is an example of human action in history, inspired by millennial hopes, but practical in its goal.

The other response of the millennial spirit was not peaceable, but was rather exclusionary and aggressive. A number of new religious ideas emerged in France just after the year 1000, for the first time found in both popular and learned groups. Often inspired by the spirit of reform, they criticized just those forms of piety, such as the Eucharist and the cult of the crucifix most associated with clerical power. The monastic leaders saw these isolated movements as part of a heretical conspiracy, arousing the wrath of God and sure to lead to no good.

Opposing heresy vigorously was an old tradition of the early Church. What was new was the burning of the heretics, as at Orleans in 1022, one of the first formal executions of heretics in the West -- to quote the specialist Richard Landis. It was not to be the last.

The second exclusionary act of the millennial spirit was against the Jews. The Jewish communities in France along the Rhine and elsewhere were tolerated by local lords as sources of trade and tax money and in the hope that they would eventually turn Christian.

Then in the late 10th and early 11th centuries, the Jews were ordered in a number of places to convert or else be expelled or killed on the spot. Such was Limoges in 1010, when the Jews were accused of inciting the Muslims to destroy the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

A few accepted baptism; many fled; others killed themselves "to hallow the name of the Lord." These suicides presaged the Jewish martyrs of Vorbst and Mainz on the Rhine, who refused to convert during the First Crusade, decades later. By then, if not before, the Jews had their own end-of-the-world scenario: The fighting between the Christians and the Muslims was fulfilling Ezekiel's prophecy of the war of Gog and Magog, before the coming of the Messiah. Their self-sacrifice, like Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac, would hasten the true Messiah's arrival all the more.

The Christian crusading zeal that crystallized in the effort to capture the Holy Land from the Muslims also first showed itself in the millennial years after 1000. Rudolphus Glauber rejoiced in how the French warriors, invoking the help of God and the Virgin, scored victories against the Muslim forces in Spain, and sent captured Moors back to the monks for slaves. More important, by the 1040s, the bishops and monks were extending the peace of God into a wider Truce of God, prohibiting any warfare on holy days, and even maintaining that "no Christian should kill another Christian, since whoever kills a Christian surely sheds the blood of Christ."

In 1095, when the Pope proclaimed the First Crusade, calling the knights of Western Europe to take up the cross in a just war against the infidels, he was drawing on both the peacemaking and the war-making potential of the millennial spirit.

This double potential gives us pause. Did the combination of internal peace movements, together with exclusionary and outwardly aggressive actions, become a long-term characteristic of Christian Europe? It certainly is true of the political religious rhetoric in the 16th century, when the papal call to war against the Turks was coupled with the argument that Christian princes should not fight each other. Is the combination characteristic of any millennial movement?

I want to conclude by putting the millennial spirit of the years 990 to 1033 in a wider and longer perspective. Let's remember that Western Christendom was only one corner of the world -- its calendar and sacred history only one possibility for ordering time. The world of Islam then stretched from the Indus River in the East to Andalus -- that is, Spain -- in the West. By its calendar, of course, starting from the year the Prophet Mohammed left Mecca for Medina, 390 was the real date for the Christian 1000. Moreover, the thousand-year interval had no special significance for the Muslims. Rather the Last Judgment might come any time, anticipated by an evil deceiver who would reign for 40 days or 40 years, until he was undone by the arrival of the Mahdi -- that is, the "rightly guided one" accompanied by Jesus. The Mahdi would bring back the Golden Age as it was at the time of the Prophet and all the world would convert to Islam.

Meanwhile, faraway in a world unknown to the Christians, the people of the Andes were organizing their sacred calendar around the solstices and the harvests and the coming of age of their young. For future happenings they had no fixed scheme, but simply asked questions

directly of their deities, or through divination.

All of these ways of marking time had a long future ahead of them. Millennial and apocalyptic movements multiplied over the centuries. During the Protestant Reformation radical sects, expecting the Second Coming any minute, took over town governments, proclaimed common property and polygamous marriage. There was a similar excitement during the English civil war under 100 years later, and it reached a peak in the magic year 1666, when a new Jewish messiah declared himself in the Holy Land. Unfortunately, the next year he converted to Islam -- (laughter) -- so the movement didn't work out so well. (Laughter.) At least not from the Jewish and Christian point of view.

Of course, there have been many apocalyptic movements since then, often without benefit of Christian and Jewish prophecies about the end of the world, or without a highly charged date. They have taken place in all parts of the world, and at both ends of the political spectrum.

I often ask myself whether, despite the danger and suffering posed by the violence, zeal and totalism of apocalyptic movements, we would want a human history deprived of millennial vision. Our dream-making capacity, our capacity to imagine, can give birth to the good as well as to the bad.

Over the centuries, "this worldly" peace movements with more limited goals have made their mark. During the religious wars in 16th century France, peasants of both religions finally joined forces to prevent any soldier, Protestant or Catholic, from crossing their fields and destroying their crops. In our own time, among many examples, think of the peacemaking role of some Catholic and Protestant women in Ireland, of some Israeli and Palestinian women in the Holy Land, and of worldwide peace efforts in regard to nuclear weapons.

History reminds us that, no matter how static the present looks, change can take place; things can be different. History reminds us that, no matter how bleak and constrained a situation, human initiative is put into play in opposition, improvisation, and transformation. The end results are not always what was wanted, are sometimes quite unexpected, but they then inspire new effort. No matter what happens, people try to do something about it, and tell stories about it and bequeath them to the future. The past urges us toward new commitment and also offers us a source of hope.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you so much, Professor Davis, for bringing the last millennium a little closer in time to all of us, for in your descriptions we hear our own fears and hopes that what we do will matter not only today, but also tomorrow.

That is certainly a hope that our next speaker, Martin Marty, has always shared. Everyone knows him as Marty, but they also know him as a Lutheran minister, a widely published author,

a speaker, a host, along with his wife, Harriet, of musicales, and a scholar who has been called the "foremost interpreter of American religion today."

For 35 years he has brought all of this and more to the University of Chicago Divinity School, where he directs their public religion project. And I am delighted that the Divinity School has created a new Martin Marty Center to carry on his tradition by looking at the role of religion in our life and culture.

Over 20 years ago, the editors of 26 religious magazines voted Martin Marty and Billy Graham as the two people who have the most influence on religion in American life. And as you saw in the video earlier, just last year the President awarded Marty the National Medal for the Humanities. What the President and I have been privileged to learn over the years, and what you will hear firsthand, is that all of this knowledge and scholarship is delivered with insight and a sense of humor and adventure.

When asked how he would like to be remembered his answer was simple: that I was a good teacher. Tonight we're privileged to have him here in the White House as a good teacher.

Thank you, Martin Marty. (Applause.)

PROFESSOR MARTY: "The people I respect," wrote E.M. Forster, "must behave as if they were immortal and if society were eternal. Both assumptions are false. Both of them must be accepted as true if we are to keep open a few breathing holes for the human spirit."

I want to thank you, Mr. President, Mrs. Clinton, the National Endowment for the Humanities, for inviting me to join you in this particular reflection of the human spirit.

In the seasons ahead we will celebrate, or mark, the end of the year, the end of the decade, the end of the century, the end of the millennium. And all of those ends combined to thinking about our own personal ends force on us the question of the meaning: the meaning of the millennium. Or, the meanings of the millennium.

The millennium in my words will refer to the thousand years past, the thousand years ahead, and this turning-point moment between them. When I use the word, "millennial thinking," I am going to refer to the ways people have visions of life ahead -- either in hope or despair. They foresee a new world in which either they will play a positive part; or disaster -- perhaps even the abrupt end of everything they know.

Thinking about the end bears on how we think about time and its uses. They tell of an astrophysicist who once lectured about the future, in which our sun will scorch our Earth. A listener hurried to the podium and asked her, "What did I hear you say? Will it all end in five million years or five billion years?" She answered, "five billion." "Whew," he sighed, "for a minute I thought you'd said five million." (Laughter.)

As we smile knowingly at such exchanges, we can still identify with the fact that, whether we have five years or five decades ahead, we tend to measure the value of our doings in the light of the end. Citizens differ, of course, when measuring these millennial themes. From the word go, we disagree on whether the impending calendar change is any big deal at all; whether the millennial turn comes in 2000 or 2001; whether the non-Christian world should continue measuring years from the birth of Christ; whether the millennial observance is a non-event, a pseudo-event, a commercial con game, a product of hype, or an event offering creative opportunity, which is what the White House is committing us to -- (laughter) -- whether millennial thinking is necessarily religious, or whether there could be simply secular perspectives. And whether to greet the future optimistically or pessimistically.

Selling those disagreements is not our business this evening. The world is observing something on millennial lines these years. And our task is to glimpse a nation as it ponders meanings in focused ways. That people do or should seek meaning is the thesis that usually inspires long, philosophical inquiries. I'm only going to cite four heavy-hitters of the passing modern age.

Albert Camus, judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. I, therefore, conclude that the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions. Theologian Emil Brunner: Since humans cannot help seeking the infinite, they now seek the meaning of their lives also in an infinity of things. John Paul Sartre called us, "stalkers of meaning." Dostoyevsky: The secret of a human's being is not only to live, but to have something to live for.

According to measurements of American life, over four-fifths of us will do this thinking about meaning and end at millennial time two in response to biblical themes. They reason for the end with Psalm 90, "so teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Of course, not all citizens agree on who God is, or on what teaching means, applying means, or wisdom could mean. So there are denominations and there are viewpoints in American life that describe our conflicts of religion, gender, race, ethnicity, income level, way of life, aesthetic taste and the accidents of existence. But still, as individuals, in groups and as a nation, we will be seeking meaning with new intensity at this time.

My long-time colleague, David Tracy, here tonight, has taught the public and me to think of three awarenesses that shadow all human life. Before we express faith and hope and love, we are conscious of finitude, contingency and transience. That means we all know that we and all we cherish will die; that we will all be subject to accidents of history; and we will pass, eventually, without a trace.

But this consciousness does not lead to doom and gloom, at least not for everyone. We stand between pessimism and optimism, never in simple forms. One of my teachers urged, in

looking ahead, "we do not know enough about the future to be absolutely pessimistic." (Laughter.) And when I am a little too optimistic about human nature, including my own, I look at the words of Pogo on all three of my study walls. A reason to temper hopes with realism, Pogo says, "We have faults we've hardly used yet." (Laughter.) Still, there abide faith, love and hope.

Turning the pages on the millennial calendar will make more urgent a question that people implicitly ask. Notre Dame's Father John Dunn phrased it and applied it to kingdoms, or nations, and individuals: "If I must someday die," he asks, "what can I do to satisfy my desire to live?"

The natural way to begin answering that at millennial times two is to think of individual end, future, and death. Last April, the Metropolitan Opera presented Leos Janacek's "The Macropolis Case." The Atlantic Magazine condensed the story of its enigmatic, egomaniacal diva with a past: "Despite her ravishing voice and looks, she's 337 years old. But time is running out on her at last. Without another dose of the elixir she drank three centuries ago, she will soon have warbled her last. The opera revolves around her attempt to recapture the formula, and her realization that immortality is no blessing, but what makes life worth living is the prospect of death."

As she sang and I heard her I couldn't help but notice her name in the superscripts -- in this generation her name is the feminine of my own father's, Emilia Marty, singing: "Dying or living, it's all one, it's the same thing. For you, everything has sense, fools, you are so lucky because of the idiotic chance that you die so soon you believe in humanity, achievement, love. There is nothing more you could want."

We render that thinking about the end of the plural at millennial times. Millennial thinking is defined by Hillel Schwartz as "the belief that the end of this world is at hand and that in its wake will appear a new world, inexhaustibly fertile, harmonious, sanctified and just." "The more exclusive the concern with the end itself," he writes, "the more such belief shades off toward the catastrophic. The more exclusive the concern with the new world the nearer it approaches utopian."

We citizens jumble together religious and non-religious millennial concerns. To observe this muddle of meanings, just check, as I did, on the Internet -- I pushed buttons "end" and "meaning." "End" turned up 4,227 items on one book sellers list alone. The very first one was "First and Second Thessalonians living in the end time." And the 4,226 titles that followed this one web and blur religious end of the world themes with secular end of the nation, end of history themes.

Push the "millennial" button for 855 items. Again, the same kind of jumble: "Best Practices in Manufacturing for the New Millennium," (Laughter.) "Angels, Demons and Gods of the New Millennium." And not too far down, "A Basic Guide to Making Sense of the

Millennium."

Book sellers cater to our hungers. In our case it's often a religious market. Already, 14 years ago the Gallup Poll found that while most Americans may not have been explicit millennialists -- yet 62 percent had, they said, "no doubts that Jesus will come on Earth again to bring an end and some kind of new beginning."

Scholars call at least a score of millions among them pre-millennialists. That "pre" means that their world views include hope that Jesus will return after the signs of the times in our evil days. Following bloody devastation in a battle against Antichrist that may take 2 billions of lives, some of them say, at Armageddon in Israel, Christ's thousand-year reign on Earth will begin and will favor them.

Most citizens are not literalists. But millennial images and words do pervade all of American history. You carry a reminder in your wallet. The dollar bill displays the great seal of the United States. It shows an eye within a triangle, recalling a three-age unfolding of history. The words on it reflect the millennial theme of a *novus ordo seculorum*, a new order of ages -- and a decisively unfinished pyramid, signaling also the work ahead in a new era, suggesting hope for the result of that work.

Millennial thinking runs through history of our hemisphere, long, I suppose, before Columbus came, but from Columbus through the Puritans to our literary greats. And their ways and words have been creative. Abraham Lincoln asked Americans, as God's "almost" chosen people, to sacrifice even life for the holy causes of this nation as the last best hope of Earth. Such thinking inspired the humane missions of America, the recall of which keeps us patriots, and it also licensed aggressive missions that put other peoples down.

Citizens have used millennial thinking to promote the general welfare through progressive movements and social gospels. They have also risked sounding arrogantly righteous, and too often they were.

The best case study we American historians agree on is inspired by promise that highlights the spirituals, gospel and soul music, or the sermons and popular expressions of the African American believing community. Their members were not, and most are not, apocalyptic doom singers -- though in slavery and under oppression they had a right to be. Instead, they adopted biblical language with a millennial and futurist cast, marked by the word vision, accompanied by dreams, hope, action.

Listen to Julia Ward Howe's the Battle Hymn of the Republic, which uses explicit millennial and apocalyptic language from the Book of Revelation. "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. He hath loosed the fateful lightening of his terrible swift sword. He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment seat, while God is marching on."

Americans have needed more the Lincoln tradition to recognize the limits within all this, of all human, all national action. Unrestrained millennial thinking is deadly, as the terrifying global moments of our century have demonstrated. Adolph Hitler used different millennial arithmetic, but spoke of a thousand-year reich. Communism -- Soviet communism -- spoke of history in four inevitable stages, with their utopianism. In both cases, and always, along the way there flowed rivers of ink, and then of blood.

Most Americans who believe in explicit, if competing, forms of millennium, do not use force to realize them. They would like everyone to be attracted or subject to their view of ends and outcomes. Fortunately -- I'm a pluralist -- no single one of them is likely to prevail.

Founder James Madison, who foresaw the security for freedom in the Republic reposing in the multiplicity of interests, and the multiplicity of sects, would have a field day among the competing millennialisms of our day, which I am now, for time reasons, going to reduce to four clusters.

The meaning of the millennium -- two of them are religious, two secular. Two are apocalyptic, as Professor Davis has described apocalypse catastrophic events between the ages; two are progressive and gradual.

Religious apocalypticism, or catastrophism, usually appears in America in the forms we pointed to as pre-millennialist. Its advocates will include the most visible and fervent futurists among us, and they will complain to you, as the year goes on, that they are also the most derided by those who do not share their world view. Their pre-millennial docudramas portray a cosmic battle between God and the forces of evil, between Christ and Antichrist. They disagree among themselves on many finer points, especially about the timing of events.

And even some of their own scholars, I'm happy to say, to help them to keep a sense of humor, or to cause others to take their doomsayings with perspective, point to some inner contradictions, which we all have. Thus their institutional leaders may often announce the immediate return of Jesus, and the end of the world as we know it, and then ask for donor funds in the form of annuities to assure that their end-time messages will be preached for generations to come. Others will take believers on tours to Jerusalem, the site of Jesus' expected return, and sell tickets marked "Round trip -- if needed." (Laughter.)

But rather than end with those smiles which come so easily, those who reject their world view, I think, will put the millennial turning seasons to better use, if they at least respect the seriousness of this search. They might inquire why, for millions of Americans, this search takes the extravagant forms it does; then probe for alternative ways to think seriously about ends, meanings and resolves, apart from that literal thousand-year rule.

Meanwhile, we must add, we need also remain alert to the sometimes dangerous forms of apocalyptic thinking. We've seen this in para-Christian versions like the Branch Davidians in

Waco; non-Christian forms like Heaven's Gate; and non-Western eruptions like Aum Shinrikyo in Japan.

Secular apocalypticism appears in extreme doom-filled versions of the end, begin with prophecies best known about the potential computer foul-up Y2K -- you all know its other nickname is the millennial bug in 2000. Among the urgent efforts to prevent nuclear or other forms of military or terrorist mass destruction, or to prevent ecological disasters that await an uncaring globe, some reach for extremes of apocalyptic despair which diverts others from seeking those peaceful life-supporting, hope-filled alternatives for our globe.

The third cluster -- religion without apocalypse, but millennium or future -- displays believers who foresee futures and ends without literal versions of inevitable catastrophe. They make up the majority of the best represented faiths in America. These faiths include the prophetic three -- you could here anticipate here of Islam, in Judaism, in America with the vast majority of Christians.

Tomorrow the President will be visiting the Pope, who is in this hemisphere celebrating, thinking about millennium, referring to it in every speech. As for the ordinary faithful, each week around the world a billion Christians, Catholic and others, recite creeds that end with faith that Jesus will come again in glory to judge the quick and the dead.

At their sacrament millions of Americans, I among them, weekly acclaim something like "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again." The millennial turn won't lead them to them to literalism, but it will cause them to reflect anew on what they mean by all this, and one hopes impel them into works of justice and mercy.

Few believers who sincerely profess this faith expect that docudrama in which heavens literally open, clouds literally part, trumpets literally blow, saints are literally lifted up before Jesus begins a literal thousand-year reign. They draw on other scriptural motifs, like their own personal resurrection or what the Apostle Paul called the groaning of the whole creation that awaits renewal and then look for their place in it.

And, finally, there's secular non-catastrophic, non-apocalyptic millennialist and futurist thinking. It concentrates on notions of stewardship of the Earth. Its adherents also number their days. Many of them will heed themes like those of the Nobel Prize-winning poet Czeslaw Milosz, who wisely told Europeans that the failure of Marx's vision has created the need for another vision, not for rejection of all visions. Or those of our Martin Luther King, Jr., who projected dreams and visions for this troubled and divided nation.

No single version of these meanings of the millennial I've said will prevail, but the energies put into the best of them can counter the cynicism that may be a greater danger than catastrophism; that can challenge the apathy that's more unnerving than prophecy. Beyond today's culture wars, polarizing, identity politics, demonization of the other and self-centered

searches, there are new reasons to address the dreams and hope of deliciously diverse elements of humanity. There will be new impulses for Americans to seek some common stories, more common ground, much common sense.

For civic purposes, whether citizens are literalists or not, religious or not, matters less than whether they make good use of these seasons of attention to the end and new beginnings. Instead of ending in pessimism or optimism, they might search for meaning with what I call realistic hope. Hope does not let itself be utterly restrained by realistic assessments. Death camp psychiatrist Victor Frankel noticed and announced that some concentration camp victims, even on the day they knew realistically to be their end, shared their last bread and fresh hope. Thus they proved, he said, that "the last of all freedoms, the one no one can take away, is the one that lets you choose your attitude in any circumstances."

Realism is mixed with hope in my closing word, a quotation from Reinhold Niebuhr -- a Christian, but one who spoke also to and for others, who put the meaning and the search into this context. He said, "Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore, we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true, or beautiful, or good, makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore, we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, could be accomplished alone; therefore, we must be saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is from our own standpoint; therefore, we must be saved by the final form of love, which is forgiveness."

Such belief, for many of us, demonstrates reasoning that goes beyond our own end, as well as creative reasoning about the end. Such faith can help citizens find meaning for the millennium, even if we cannot claim we have found the determinative and decisive meaning of the millennium.

Thank you. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. I would like to take about the last four sentences of Professor Marty's talk and emblazon it in the consciousness of every human being on the face of the Earth.

This is a wonderful night. I'd like to begin by thanking the First Lady for leading our Millennium Project and by bringing these two remarkable people here. (Applause.) And also -- I'm terribly impressed with both of them; they took about 40 minutes, by my count, and did the last thousand years and the entire future. (Laughter.) Took me an hour and 17 minutes the other night to talk about one year. (Laughter.)

I also want to express my gratitude to both of you for not making fun of those of us who insist on ignoring the Gregorian calendar and proclaiming the millennium next New Year's Eve at midnight. (Laughter.)

I thought Professor Davis did a great service to all of us who are less well-read in what happened 1000 years ago by debunking some of the popular myths. Clearly, not everyone was giving away all their possessions or cowering in churches waiting for the world to end. Maybe what was said tonight will discourage some of our fellow citizens who seem determined to buy desert land and hoard gold, bullets, and skoal in their pickup trucks. (Laughter). I don't know. You laugh, this is a major source of conversation every morning in the White House, here.

I also thank her for reminding us about the bold voyages of discovery, the important advances in human knowledge. I thank her for reminding us that people were -- and I quote what she said -- "enmeshed in reading texts together." Who would have thought about book clubs 1000 years ago.

I thank her for telling us about the medieval Peace of God movement, which has a millennial connection to us in what has been going on in Northern Ireland, the Balkans, the Middle East, Africa. I thank her, too, for reminding us that ordinary people, even a long time ago, can make a difference to a good end.

I thank Professor Marty for his fundamental insights, for reminding us to be both hopeful and humble. He asked all these questions. I enjoyed Professor Hawking being here and trying to deal with all these questions of time -- how we measure time; why do we care so much about the millennium, or a century, or a year, or our birthday's and anniversaries for that matter. We have to have some way of organizing our thoughts and our plans against the mysteries of time and timelessness. We have to find some way of explaining our poor efforts to fulfill our own destinies and to live out our small piece of God's design.

Most of us, sooner or later, come to the conclusion that life really is a journey, not a destination, until the end. But we all still need a few benchmarks along the way to get there.

I thank them both for ending on a note of hope and for recognizing that you cannot have hope without faith -- for believers, faith in God -- and in the end you cannot practice hope without charity or love.

One of the dilemmas I constantly confront as President is the necessity of believing in the idea of progress, with the certainty of man's and woman's constant demonstration of making the same old mistakes over and over again, millennium after millennium, in new and different guises; and the certainty that perfection cannot be achieved in this life.

I think there is a way to reconcile the idea of progress with the frailty of humanity. I think that you can make a case that, on balance, the world is a better place today than it was a thousand years ago for people who have had a chance to drink fully of life's possibilities. I think you can make a case that we are obliged, all of us as human beings, to try to extend that opportunity to more and more of our fellow citizens on this small planet. And Mr. Goldin's successors in

interests will be taking us into outer space to see if we can find some others, somewhere else, to worry about a thousand years from now.

We thank Professors Davis and Marty for giving us a chance to make some sense of the millennium, and for reminding us, in the end, that the only meaning it will have is the meaning we give it, and our own lives.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Now, I'd like to ask Ellen Lovell to take over the floor and turn over the floor to all of you and to the thousands who are joining us, thanks to technology, for some questions.

Ellen?

MS. LOVELL: Thank you so much, Mr. President. (Applause.) As I listened to Mrs. Clinton and Professor Davis, I couldn't help wondering, what if one of us went back a thousand years? What would seem utterly strange to us? What would seem familiar? And we have another medievalist with us, Professor Joanne Moran Cruz (phonetic), chair of the History Department at Georgetown University. And, Professor Cruz, if you would stand and take the microphone and just elaborate, briefly, on our medieval inheritance. And I know you have a question, too.

PROFESSOR CRUZ: Thank you. President Clinton, Mrs. Clinton, Professors Davis and Marty, I'm honored to be here. My question relates more to the medieval than to the apocalyptic sphere. And my question relates to the fact that most people in this culture do not understand that the foundations of this culture really are imbedded in the Christian, the Judaic and in the Islamic world of 500 years and more ago.

I think they don't understand -- and those of us who teach, work at enhancing that understanding -- the extent to which our institutions, the universities, the colleges, public libraries, parliaments, laws, the jury system; our scientific achievements in optics, in mathematics; our economic institutions in banking; our culture; our literature, Chaucer and Dante -- one of my favorites, Christine dePezone, (phonetic) who was the first woman to earn a living from writing alone in the French court in 1400 -- all of these achievements in many other areas -- and I've listed some of them -- I forgot mechanical clocks, which I shouldn't have forgotten, since we've got mechanical clock manuscripts out there -- mechanical clocks and compasses, et cetera.

So to get to my question, what is it, then, that -- or why should this culture, why should we focus on the past? Why is it important, or is it, indeed, important, for us to go back to the past and recognize the accomplishments of people who have done these things in the past?

And a future question: Will people more than 500 years from now go back and think

about our accomplishments and recognize our accomplishments? Thank you.

PROFESSOR DAVIS: Professor Cruz, thank you for your question and your description of the many features of our 20th century life that develop -- some going back to the year 1000 and some to the year 1500.

I think there are several reasons to study -- to be interested in the past, in addition to what it's contributed to us. One is partly the fascination of in human life, of different ways the people have lived, including ways that might not contribute to us.

Martin Marty spoke of the loss of memory -- that we're here a brief time and forgotten. And I think one of the things that's so wonderful about studying the past is that we can recapture that; that we can give a story to those, both those who might be celebrated because they're kings and queens and great bishops and monks, and those who are simple peasants. And I think that's a moving connection. It gives us a sense of contract with the past, which is something else from benefiting from its contributions, which is a double kind of gratitude -- a gratitude that they've given us things and that they've lived and bequeathed to us their stories.

And I feel the same way about the future, if I can move into Martin Marty's area, that we make a kind of promise to the future to tell them the best stories that we can.

The other thing I think is important is to recognize the very great range in ways that people have lived. I think that is something that gives us both ability to understand other cultures better in our own time -- we don't have to agree with these different ways, but I think it gives us a deeper appreciation of the potential in human experience.

And, thirdly, I think it helps us address the question that the President raised about how we think about progress. Because it does both give us a sense of humility -- I mean, there is violence, we just have it, we have it and we have it. On the other hand, there are features of human life that have changed. I think among them would be the experience of an 11th century mother or a 16th century mother and her husband, of losing, of finding it very difficult to get pregnant at all -- very, very hard -- and to carry a child to birth. And then losing half of the children one did bring into life by the time they were five.

Now, there are issues in human education, in raising children and so forth. But the fact that that constant working of the woman's body, and the constant suffering of fathers and mothers -- and the loss of children, the constant hoping that a child would survive -- I think that we are better placed in regard to that. So that story would be one, that I think that we should know about today.

PROFESSOR MARTY: I won't say much about future, it's basically her question and we historians have nothing to say about the future. As soon as something happens, we tell you why it had to happen that way. (Laughter.) Who is it who said, "I've seen the future and it's very

much like the present, only longer"? (Laughter.) But that's my key to how I would respond to your question.

Back in the '60s, many of the movements thought they could move into the future by rejecting the past. And one great teacher said to them, Greece, Rome, Africa, Asia -- didn't make any difference; Jewish, Christian -- you want to trash the tradition -- he said, "You may not possess the tradition, but the tradition possesses you." That is, every word we use tonight, every tone, the building we're in, everything about it bears something to us. And I have a hard time naming any movement since the '60s which is not fundamentally a telling of the story, a re-telling of the story.

At our Divinity School, there are more women students -- some men -- writing on Mesthilde of Magdeburg, and Hildegard of Bingen, and Julianne of Norwich than about any modern woman. They're not antiquarian; they're doing that in order to piece together a self for a kind of a future. The African Americans -- it was a story that maybe some of them knew, but certainly we've learned more in the last 30 years, and I think it enriches our humanity -- a plug for the humanities -- that's what the humanities are about.

MS. LOVELL: Thank you so much. We're going to change location completely now and go to the Internet. We have a question from the Saksika (phonetic) Nation, Mrs. Clinton, and the Internet also tells us that they're Blackfoot people from Northern Montana and Southern Alberta.

MRS. CLINTON: This is from Walking Eagle, the Saksika (phonetic) Nation, and it's for Professor Martin Marty. For Christians the turn of millennium has a historical baseline. Is there an equivalent event horizon for the people of the Americas first nations? Is the millennium significant to them?

PROFESSOR MARTY: There have been many millennial movements in the first nations, the Ghost Dance one of the best known of them. It's always very hard to sort these out. We Americans mix things, but -- and the first nations and those who came later mix up our stories, too, so it's very hard to get a pure form story that isn't touched by Christian millennialism, as was Voivoka and the Ghost Dance movement. But again, the more stories we hear from all the peoples -- I had studied Lakota Sioux most of all -- they don't usually put it in terms of millennia, it's more the old sages of the tribe, the elders. It goes by generations instead of millennia. Still, there is an investment of meaning which end and time gives us.

And when you think of the most horrible moments of that history, Wounded Knee and so on, what every movement has to do is cope with what that end meant for the sake of new beginnings, it's very hard to be hopeful about some of these circumstances. We once left a Lakota place, my wife and I -- ask everybody who was there, there are so many problems. It's the poorest county in the United States, Rosebud Reservation, and medical care is hard to come by, employment is hard to come by, nothing to grow, nothing under it. Is there much hope? I

don't know if there is much hope. Why do you stay? They are such beautiful people. And I think by telling the story, they keep that going. And I think that when hope comes, it comes on those terms.

MS. LOVELL: Let's stay with the Internet again, here. This is from Alicia Lynch, in Bowie, Maryland, and it's for Professor Davis: In your remarks, you mentioned Latin texts, but in the year 1000, how many people could actually read and write Latin or any other language?

PROFESSOR DAVIS: A very small percentage, indeed. We're thinking of the clergy, the monks, the nuns, the bishops, most priests. That's a very small percentage of the population.

We should remember, however, that the liturgy is said in Latin, so that as an oral language, at least the Credo and the basic prayers would be sounds that people would know. I think we should also remember -- there is some vernacular French written. You have some vernacular French texts -- and in German as well. The sagas are not really written down in the Norwegian languages until the 12th century. But we are beginning to have the vernacular languages written down.

But, lest the woman who is asking the question think that it's an impoverished culture because of that, I want to stress again how rich and complex the oral culture is, and how there is a fluid boundary between the learned world and the world right next to it. People read stories aloud; they read texts aloud; they read prayers aloud. They move back and forth between the two worlds.

MS. LOVELL: Good. Professor Davis, you mentioned in your speech the "noble nun Roswitha"? And you raised an intriguing question about women's roles in a millennium ago. And tonight, we have a National History Day Teacher of the Year, Cynthia Mastoller, (phonetic) and she's here with five History Day students -- I think you can recognize -- from different D.C. schools, and I know one has a question.

Q Good evening, Mr. President, Mrs. Clinton, Professors Davis and Marty. I know that, as a teenage girl in 1999, I know that the role of women is probably a lot more significant than it was around the year 1000. And I also know that my average day is spent using the technologies that are now available to us, like telephones, televisions and computers. But my question is, what was the average day like for a young woman around my age, around the year 1000?

PROFESSOR DAVIS: She would not go to school unless she was a young nun -- and where she might get very good education, but here again that's a minority. She would, if she'd made it to the age of high school, she would be working with her mother all day long at a farm, helping her with the animals, helping with the garden, helping with the sheep; maybe having to take care of the younger children in the family. If she were well-born she would be, in the course of studying, probably in a nunnery. Maybe she'd have a private tutor, she might learn Latin. This is, again, a minority.

The particular group I like to think about is a middling group whose language might be the vernacular French of the time or the vernacular German of the time, whose mother might be a woman troubadour, because there were women bards, teaching her daughter not only maybe healing techniques, but how to sing love songs or the songs of the warriors. And I think if I try to imagine what kind of young woman I might want to be, I think I'd choose the lady bard.
(Laughter.)

PROFESSOR MARTY: You are one. (Laughter.)

PROFESSOR DAVIS: We just remake ourselves in the historical past.

MS. LOVELL: Now, you mentioned, Professor Marty, that tomorrow the President and Mrs. Clinton will be with the Pope. And tonight we're fortunate enough to have David Tracy here, from the University of Chicago Divinity School. So Father Tracy, would you tell us what the millennium means to Catholics around the world?

FATHER TRACY: President and Mrs. Clinton, Professors Davis and Marty. I was so taken by the talks this evening and the event itself that it did make me think of what I find striking in the Catholic instance about the Pope's request and pleas with his fellow Catholics for the millennium. It might be worth noting that these two years before the millennium we have been requested to do repentance -- both personal repentance; but also, which is most unusual in history, I think, corporate repentance of the Catholic Church in relationship to other Christian churches and especially, of course, to the Jewish people throughout the centuries.

It seems to me an entirely fitting idea that he has tried to proclaim almost a universal Yom Kippur or Day of Repentance, for not just all of us as individuals, but as corporate bodies -- as President Clinton helped us to reflect some years ago on slavery, or this evening on Wounded Knee and other such things for our corporate body.

The second thing he did that I think is both significant and interesting is he returned to our Jewish roots and spoke of the need next year, after the two years preparation of repentance, for forgiveness -- again both individual and corporate -- and tried to incorporate the ancient Jewish tradition in the Hebrew Bible -- for Christians, the Old Testament -- of the Year of Jubilee -- so that on Christmas Eve when the Door of Jubilee is opened at St. Peter's, which it is only every 50 years and this would be the Great Jubilee year -- there will be a call for jubilee and forgiveness of others, as well as asking the nations in his latest talk that the rich nations, as in ancient Israel, rich people might find ways to forgive some of the debts of the poor nations.

I think these notes of repentance and forgiveness I have at least found very moving and helpful. They join, of course, with all Christian bodies, and as both of you have made clear, with all persons in a sense really of hope and of solidarity -- that as Mrs. Clinton said, we live in this unique moment of the millennium and each of us in our brief lives, or each of us in whatever

body we -- or bodies, more likely -- we belong to, corporate bodies, find occasions for such hope and such solidarity.

And I would like to ask Professor Marty especially -- I agree he knows more about American religion than any living person -- if there is a move among Christian bodies and other religious bodies to try to have some joint celebration, religious celebration of this. There have been many reports that the Pope was hoping to join other religious leaders in Jerusalem and on Mount Sinai for such a declaration of human solidarity and human hope. And I wonder if you know more than I do about that?

PROFESSOR MARTY: On the world scene much has already gone on. And the World Council of Churches, which just met in Zimbabwe, have made that one of its themes along the way. In the United States, I noticed in today's paper -- an item that nine Protestant bodies are moving close to each other, as they always have been doing and always will be doing -- (laughter) -- Zeno's Paradox, the rabbit that keeps chasing the turtle and always halves the distance and never quite gets there might be a paradigm for what's going on here.

I would rather say that there are kinds of action -- they're all talking millennium. I'm an ELC Lutheran; we've already gotten some liturgies with it, and a proclamation written by my brother-in-law for the bishop. So millennialism creeps all over the place.

I think the boundaries are now so low between them that it will not be hard to make formal movements out of it. But there's no single millennial theme, as you could have it, with the Pope. I think the Pope's own -- his own age, his own thinking about his end, his own striving to bring the Church into the new millennium -- in some ways keeps him vigorous and going, against all odds. And I don't think most individuals have that kind of impulse to match.

MS. LOVELL: Thank you and, before we leave Father Tracy, I just wanted to say how pleased we are to have your mother back at the White House for the first time in 80 years.

PROFESSOR MARTY: Eileen or David, for the President and First Lady's sake, would you say who was President the last time you visited the White House?

MRS. TRACY: Woodrow Wilson.

PROFESSOR MARTY: Woodrow Wilson. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: This next question is from Catherine Little, in Salt Lake City, and it's for Professor Marty: Millennial movements have recurred throughout American history. Do you see major differences today in the way Americans express their millennial hopes and fears?

PROFESSOR MARTY: From 1607, when Anglo-Americans came -- bearing that part of the tradition you were describing -- until about the 1870s or 80s, almost all millennial thinking

was progressive-optimistic. Jonathan Edwards, the greatest of the revivalists, always would say, "All that is adding up to God's greater glory will begin not in the East, but in the West." That was kind of an arrogant arrogation.

And many of the movements -- anti-slavery, abolition, temperance -- and these were all millennial movements, they make no sense apart from that. A great change came in the 1870s or '80s and the sudden changes in the culture and another strand of English thought, British thought, worked its way here through people like the Evangelist Dwight Moody, which switched -- that's where the pre-millennialism began to come in and it took on the more catastrophic or the negative tone. These two vie with each other all the time.

To me, one of the most interesting things, though, is that many of the people who, as pre-millennialists, used to have nothing but a message of doom and sudden end have now said -- you have to say that they've always been wrong when they set a date; we're still here. And there are many biblical passages that say that we should occupy until Christ comes. And I think there's a good deal of motion -- numbers of people in the younger Evangelical movements -- I don't mean young people, but more movements are trying to take that energy and turn it around into -- very suddenly, after resisting the ecological environmental movements as being pagan and heathen and New Age -- very suddenly they're taking them up. And I think there will be a lot of energy in that. And that has a millennial cast, too.

MS. LOVELL: Thank you so much, Professor Marty. I know that we have a theologian here who has a question for our theologian. So I want to recognize Reverend Hicks from the Metropolitan Baptist Church.

REVEREND HICKS: President and Mrs. Clinton, Dr. Davis, Dr. Marty. As church persons and theologians, we are by nature, I fear, inclined to resolve our sticky issues by resorting to the often ethereal and romantic arena of hope. Are we wrong to believe that we are faced actually with a growing tide of secular apocalypticism? And in what real way does a theology of hope respond to this pessimistic challenge?

Or, stated differently, how effectively can the Church really mix realism with hope, particularly in light of the urban apocalypse of despair from which many believe there is no real escape?

PROFESSOR MARTY: Hope has dirty hands. Dorothy Day's great motto was from Dostoyevsky -- love -- ethereal love -- love in action is a harsh and dreadful love. And she organized so many movements and worked so closely with the poor out of that theme; that's what love should look like.

And the kind of hope we're talking about tonight I think is not -- I loved your word, ethereal, because you can often do that and it often has been used that way -- pie in the sky, by and by, just let things bad go on because it will get better later. But, again, I'm going to

refer to African Americans as an example. Some years ago Eugene Genovese, one of our historians was, as a Marxist, was going to write a book on how ethereal hope kept blacks from ever having revolt, revolution, rebellion. As a Marxist he thought, they're peasants, why don't they revolt? Proletariates, why don't they revolt? And they didn't.

He tells in the beginning of this book he wrote, "Roll Jordan, Roll," that in the act of writing it he found they could not possibly have -- there are 12 slaves on one plantation, there are 20 on the next and there are 200 dogs between and swamps and there's no way, you couldn't have had a movement. And then he goes on, so what did they do?

And his book is an interesting testimonial to the way in which, in the worst of circumstances, they imparted hope and dignity and produced great things. And that's, I think, why you couldn't move them. Is it Frederick Douglas or Daniel Walker when they said, there's a wonderful thing called the American Colonization Society -- we etherealists would have a nice country if you'd just go back to Africa; we'll raise the money, you go to Africa. He said, no, why should we go? We watered this soil with our tears, we manured it with our blood. It's our place.

And I think that in the midst of that, I don't know any people in American life -- expect maybe the Native Americans on reservation -- who, as a people, had to endure so much along the way. And, yet, you hear the songs, their hope. They can't be ethereal, they had to be grounded.

You know better than I that all the spirituals have a double sound to them. One is that far off Sweet Chariot, and the other is Underground Railroad coming by. And I think that that's the way -- if we're going to change the city of today I think it would have to be in those terms.

I'm going to take one more a little quickly on this. Some years ago at the American Historical Association somebody read a paper on the Presbyterian clergy in the Carolinas in the 1830s, and portrayed them as good people, moral people, good family people, good preachers, good believers, good teachers, good everything. And meanwhile, every one of them was a strong defender of slavery.

And in the hotel room, the way historians do late at night over a beer, somebody said to the 10 or 12, what do you suppose 100 years from now they're going to say about us? We ought to write on a piece of paper, everyone had some version of we have learned to live with a permanent underclass and don't have the imagination or the resources to face it -- which is what the two excuses were back then. And so we justify that we can't do anything. So imagination and resources for it, but if you don't have hope you aren't going to act at all.

PROFESSOR DAVIS: Just to add a note, the historical record is full of terrible massacre, terrible exiles, economic systems full of dreadful toil, despairing situations with enormous numbers of people very poor, barely surviving, losing their children early in life. And any resistance movement, any oppositional movement has had to be sparked over time with some kind of hope. I would only add that -- and must be -- the totally despairing, don't get the act

together and start moving -- the only thing that one can hope for in this is a dialogue going on between hope and realism. And that's the thing I think we have to look for. Just as we spoke before about a dialogue between humility and ambition, a dialogue constantly going on so that one doesn't just dominate over the other. That's where I think we should go.

MS. LOVELL: Well, I have the feeling that time is speeding up. And while we're marking it here I wanted to do two things quickly -- take another question from the Internet, recognize Reverend Jackson, and let the President have the last word.

MRS. CLINTON: This is from Dr. Joseph W. Epstein, from Monroe, New York and it's for the President: Should the dawning of this new millennium see a greater participation of scientists in studies aimed at preserving our environment and recapturing what has been lost? Government and business incentives would be required to encourage scientists in these areas. Hopefully, a person who recaptures a rain forest could receive as much a claim as the batter of ever more home runs. Thank you. (Laughter and applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the short answer to his question is, obviously, yes. If you look at -- one of the things I was going to say in my closing remarks I'll just say now to respond to this question, because we don't have enough time for everybody to ask a question for us all to have a conversation. I wish we did.

I think something that would be helpful for all of you is if, when you go home tonight, before you go to bed, if you would take out a piece of paper and a pencil or a pen, and write down the three things that you're most worried about, with the dawn of a new millennium, and the three things that you're most hopeful about. And then ask yourself what, if anything, can you do about either one?

Now, I think, with the growth of the world's population, and with the emergence of a new economy based more on ideas and information and technology and less on industrial patterns of production, we still see an enormous destruction of the world's resources. And the most serious problem is the problem of climate change, global warming.

The rain forest is important for a lot of reasons -- he mentioned the rain forest -- because an enormous percentage of the oxygen generated from non-ocean sources comes from rain forests; because well over half the plant and animal life on the globe lives in the rain forests; and therefore, the answers to some of my most profoundly important medical questions lie in the rain forest, quite apart from our responsibility to preserve it just for what it is.

So we have put a lot of emphasis on trying to create more financial and other incentives for people to deal with climate change and global warming, to try to help to save the rain forests. And I have, for years, kind of brooded about the prospect of having a global alliance between governments, chemical companies, and others that would have an interest in it, in joining together, in effect, to pay to save the rain forests. The government of Brazil actually has a

program there, where they try to invest and set aside large tracts of rain forest land.

But I think one of the things that is going to happen in the next century is that we will move very close to the limits of our body's ability to live. I think you're going to see an exponential increase in life expectancy in the next 30 years or so. And to go back to what you said, I think that it's going to aggravate the underclass problem, because you have, in countries where the health system is breaking down, a decline in life expectancy.

Now, where that's going on, there will be more and more pressure to develop more and more scientific discoveries, and also to more democratically spread it, and to lift people out of poverty. I think that there has to be an enormous amount of money and incentives and time and thought given to how a lot of countries can skip a stage of economic development that would otherwise require them to destroy what remains of the world's natural resources, and put us in a position where we could never solve this global warming problem.

And that's why I signed the Kyoto treaty on climate change, why I pushed it so hard. I think it can be the organizing principle to get to the objective that our questioner asks. Unfortunately, my successors will have to do a lot of the work, but I hope we'll at least have laid the foundation for it, because it will be one of the most significant public questions of the next -- not just the next century, the next couple of decades. It would be on my list of three.

MS. LOVELL: Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to recognize Reverend Jesse Jackson.

REVEREND JACKSON: President and Mrs. Clinton, thank you so much for this evening. Professor Davis and Professor Marty, good to be sitting at your feet again.

I'm concerned that the lecture began with Eurocentrism, putting Africa in the margins, Asia -- half of the human race -- not even on the chart. The anthropologists suggest that Africa is in the center of things. We speak of the Judeo-Christian heritage, to some extent, Islam. The Bible is Afrocentric in the sense of mentions of Egypt and Libya and Ethiopia and Jesus escaping to Egypt, and David and Bathsheba and Moses and the press of Egypt.

It seems to me that to not make that crooked way straight, as we begin another millennium, to keep putting Goree Island behind Ellis Island -- when in fact, Goree Island precedes Ellis Island in our experience as a country -- and I would just hope that the thinkers, the theologians, those who conceptualize at least would move from us the distortion of a Eurocentric map that did not take into account the whole and the oldest of known humanity.

Thank you.

MS. LOVELL: That would be a great one, because you addressed that. Short answer, because we need to go to the President.

PROFESSOR DAVIS: I agree with that concern very much. And just to assure you that there is a whole school of historical writing that is trying to de-center Europe -- not trash Europe, not at all -- but to de-center Europe so that multiple stories can be told.

Tonight, I chose to -- because we were discussing the European millennium -- to tell the European story and to illuminate what's called the Dark Ages, but just reminding the audience that Europe is only a small corner of the world. But you're quite right in identifying a major way in which we have to rethink how we live in the rest of the world and how we tell the story of the rest of the world's past.

PROFESSOR MARTY: One contemporary thing, 30 seconds. In the Christian world there's no other way to think than that. And we don't have to go back a thousand years. In the last 24 hours sub-Saharan Africa has 16,000 more Christians than it did. In the last 24 hours the northern world has 3,000 fewer. Why do we think the Pope is spending all that time in the southern part of this hemisphere? That's the dynamism. The Christian part of the world, that's where the action is. And when I fumbled a little bit on David Tracy's question about what's going on here it's because on these topics it's kind of dull compared to what's going on in some of the other places in the world.

And I think the Pope in Catholicism and many Protestant and Orthodox leaders are seeing the same thing happening. So I think the future is very much going to direct us to exactly that. And as the President said, the problems of the way the richer and the poorer get further separated is a religious problem.

MS. LOVELL: Thank you so much.

Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I will be very brief. First of all, I think we should thank our speakers again. They were magnificent. (Applause.)

Secondly, I would like to say that I think we all leave here feeling that we now have more questions than we did when we showed up, which means they succeeded. I would just like to leave you with this one thought. You all know that I am a walking apostle of hope and progress. The question is, how do you pursue it without arrogance, with appropriate humility and without a definition that is too narrow?

Reverend Jackson asked a question about Africa, and Dr. Marty gave a great rejoinder about how we had to be more concerned because there were more and more Christians growing in Africa and fewer elsewhere. I would like to ask you to think about another thing.

Our whole sense of time and marking time is so rooted in the development of our various monotheistic philosophies -- Christianity for me, and for many of you, or Judaism, or Islam.

How do you think this whole discussion would sound, tonight, to a serious Buddhist? Or a serious Confucian? How would -- we argue with them about the idea of progress. How would they argue with us about the idea of the immutable? How can we reconcile the two? Because in the end, that's what religious faith does. It gives you a sense of the timeless, and a sense of what you're supposed to do with your time.

And I just -- this has been thrilling for me. But I hope all of you will remember the question I asked you. And if you feel so inclined later, feel free to write to me about the things that you're most worried about and the most hopeful about, and what you think I ought to spend my time between now and the millennium doing for you and the rest of the world.

Thank you. Join us in the dining room for a reception. Thank you very much.

END

9:15 P.M. EST