



**IMMINENCE AS A KEY TO INTERPRETING THE HETERODOXY
OF JOACHIM OF FIORE: THE RADICALIZATION
OF THE *TRACTATUS***

***LA INMINENCIA COMO CLAVE DE INTERPRETACIÓN DE LA
HETERODOXIA DE JOAQUÍN DE FIORE. LA
RADICALIZACIÓN DEL TRACTATUS***

STEFANO ABBATE

Universitat Abat Oliba CEU, CEU Universities

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ABSTRACT

The writings of Joachim of Fiore are characterised by a progressive radicalisation of his eschatological positions, culminating in the *Tractatus*, in which he defends openly heterodox positions. This article seeks to demonstrate that the concept of imminence is an important presence throughout Joachim's work, even from his earliest writings. Indeed, thanks to Joachim's highly personal biblical exegesis, imminence becomes the key to understanding the development of his eschatology. Accordingly, Elijah, not Christ, is the centre of the story, and the Church of Peter is about to be superseded by that of John.

Keywords: Joachim of Fiore; third status; imminence; age of Spirit, *Tractatus*.

RESUMEN

Los escritos de Joaquín de Fiore se caracterizan por una progresiva radicalización de sus posiciones escatológicas que culmina en el *Tractatus* donde defiende posiciones abiertamente heterodoxas. Este artículo pretende demostrar que el concepto de inminencia es una presencia importante en toda la obra de Joaquín, incluso desde sus primeros escritos. De hecho, gracias a la personalísima exégesis bíblica de Joaquín, la inminencia se convierte en la clave para entender el desarrollo de su escatología. Así, Elías, y no Cristo, es el centro de la historia, y la Iglesia de Pedro está a punto de ser sustituida por la de Juan.

Palabras clave: Joaquín de Fiore; tercer estado; inminencia; edad del Espíritu; *Tractatus*.

I. INTRODUCCIÓN

The importance of the work¹ of Joachim of Fiore has been the subject of study in recent decades, particularly as regards the theologian's legacy in the genesis of modern thought.² This debate also focuses on whether Joachim's work should be interpreted as orthodox or heterodox and whether, to a certain extent, his eschatological interpretations can be rescued from ecclesiastical condemnations of his texts.³ In this respect, academic positions differ, and there is no unanimous opinion.

1 Generally speaking, translations of Joachim of Fiore's works from the Latin are the work of the author. Whenever possible, existing Italian and Spanish translations have been consulted. As no complete critical edition of Joachim's work exists as yet, it is considered appropriate to reproduce the original text of manuscripts in footnotes, while certain more significant citations have been inserted directly into the body of the text. The transliteration of the original Latin text has been conserved faithfully, including, particularly, the termination of *ae* diphthongs as *e*. Where the Latin original does not appear, this is merely for practical reasons and to avoid redundancies.

2 See Henri de Lubac, *La posterité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2014).

3 This, leaving aside the conclusions of the Anagni Commission (1255), condemning the work of Gerard of Borgo San Donnino and studying its alleged links to that of Joachim of Fiore, and despite the condemnation of his work by the Council of Arles (1263). Although this was a provincial condemnation, his work was now irremediably linked to that of Gerard, and the damage to Joachim's orthodoxy was done. Moreover, his trinitarian theories were condemned in 1215 by Pope Innocent III, when Peter Lombard's doctrine was reaffirmed. Here, the crux of the question resided in Joachim's accusation, contained in a *libellus* that has not been conserved, the *De essentia seu unitate Trinitateis*, in which he affirmed that Peter Lombard had conceived a *quaternitas* rather than a *trinitas*, abstracting the unity of people from the individual substances as a "*summa res non generans, nec genita, nec procedens*". For Joachim, it was

Besides taking into account the evolution of Joachim's thought, no approach to this issue can be made without consideration of the significance of "imminence" in his work. In fact, the radicalisation of his thought with regard to the superseding of the present *tempus* to enter the age of the Spirit runs in practically linear fashion over time, increasing with the passing of the years due to his exegesis of the biblical texts from which he gradually drew his final conclusions. That is why the imminence of a forthcoming historical culmination appears more strongly in his final work, the *Tractatus super quatuor Evangelia*, in which Joachim of Fiore's theses attain a force not even hinted at in his earlier texts. As we shall see, while, in the first part of his literary production, there is still a certain ambiguity regarding the placement in time of the coming of the age of the Spirit and the scale of the rupture between the pilgrim and hierarchical Church and the Church of the third age, in the *Tractatus* it seems impossible to sustain the orthodoxy of Joachim of Fiore, and a rupture with Catholic ecclesiology is evident. To understand this evolution, it is necessary first of all to find the exegetical model that led Joachim to these conclusions. To this end, we shall gradually examine the relationship between *status*, *orders* and Trinity to reveal that the age of the Spirit is very close at hand. We shall then consider this imminence through a new interpretation of the *Apocalypse* and, finally, the definitive rupture signified by the *Tractatus*.

II. BIBLICAL EXEGESIS AND IMMINENCE

Joachim builds his eschatological edifice through his own personal exegesis of the Scripture. Without this novel interpretation of the Scripture, one would not have been able to reach the conclusions that we shall later see. Thanks to a

necessary to affirm the reality of the Trinity *in* the unity, since Lombard's doctrine affirmed that unity overcame all differentiation in the Trinity. More than as three people *in* one God, Joachim preferred to conceive of the Trinity as three people who *are* one God. This enabled him, in the human dimension, to maintain the unity of the three *status* of history. In this regard, see. Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the later Middle Ages. A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 31; Henry Mottu, *La manifestazione dello Spirito secondo Gioacchino da Fiore* (Casale Monferrato: Marietti, 1983), 25; Herbert Grundmann, *Studi su Gioacchino da Fiore* (Genova: Marietti, 1989), 116-119; Morton W. Bloomfield, "Joachim of Flora: A critical survey of his canon, teachings, sources, biography, influence" *Traditio* 13 (1957): 263-264. Regarding later interpretations of this question, see Bonaventure, *Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi* (Ad Claras Aquas: Quaracchi, 1882), 1: 121: "Quia *essentia* est res una quantum ad suppositum et significatum; non enim supponit personas; sed *Deus* est res una quantum ad significatum, sed plures quantum ad suppositum". Thomas Aquinas also explicitly attacked Joachim's position, see *Summa Theologiae* (Madrid: BAC, 1951) I, q. 39, a. 5, in c.: "Respondeo dicendum quod circa hoc erravit abbas Ioachim, asserens quod, sicut dicitur, Deus genuit Deum, ita potest dici quod *essentia* genuit *essentiam*; considerans quod, propter divinam simplicitatem, non est aliud Deus quam divina *essentia*".

mystical vision that he describes in the *Expositio*,⁴ an interpretation of a verse from the Apocalypse⁵ that was incomprehensible to him became clear as he realised the complete *concordia* between the Old and New Testaments. He suggested this *concordia litterae* as a new development in response to the allegorical interpretations that predominated at the time:

We affirm that the concordance is truly a similitude of equal proportion (“similitudinem eque proportionis”) between the New and Old Testaments. I say it is equal in number, not in dignity; in this way a person and a person, an order and an order, a war and a war look each other in the face due to a resemblance (“ex parilitate quadam”): such as, for example, Abraham and Zechariah, Sarah and Elizabeth, Isaac and John the Baptist, Jacob and Jesus Christ as a man, the twelve patriarchs and the apostles, similar in number and in everything that there may be of resemblance. And all this should be done where possible, not in the allegorical sense, but according to the concordance of the two Testaments.⁶

The importance of this text resides in the fact that Joachim is no longer interested in, that is to say, the relationship between the Old and New Testaments as letter and spirit or according to a harmony in which the New Testament was latent in the Old and the Old was revealed in the New (“Vetus in Novo patet, Novum in Veteri latet”); rather, the spiritual interpretation is now taken directly from the letter which, comparing one with the other, reveals the spiritual meaning of the Scripture. The characters that Joachim considers related are not mere types or allegorical representations, but are linked according to a strict parallel which dictates that, since they are presented in the Old Testament, they must necessarily also be manifested in the New.

Characters and events are intertwined in a fabric of relationships that is virtually inexhaustible and suggests historical and metahistorical patterns and models of interpretation. This literal concordance has profound consequences in the interpretation of historical events, as is noted in the *Enchiridion*:

We should now consider the concordance of the Testaments so that we can see how the New Testament corresponds to the Old, and that the intention of the Holy Spirit, who is the author of this book, becomes all the more resplendent as we recognise that the new events concord with the old and that these they almost

4 Joachim of Fiore, *Expositio in Apocalypsim* (Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva, 1964), fol. 39r-v.

5 See Ap. 1.10.

6 Joachim of Fiore, *Concordia Novi ac Veteris Testamenti* (Frankfurt, a.M.: Minerva, 1964), fol.7 rb-va.

receive subsistence, coupling together. If you wished to establish the concordance of the two Testaments that the Scripture often mentions, in it the two Testaments would be seen as two opposing faces: the first part of the time would begin with Jacob and end with Christ, the second would start with Christ and reach to the end of time, when Christ will come a second time in glory to fulfil the Judgment.⁷

There is a very close relationship between the people in the Trinity and the interpretation of the Testaments: just as the Father is not begotten and the Son is begotten, in the same way that the New Testament was born of the Old. The two people in the Trinity *breathe* the Holy Spirit, so both Testaments are born of a single spiritual intelligence, fruit of the Holy Spirit. This “*unus spiritualis intellectus*”⁸ is the cornerstone of Joachim of Fiore’s hermeneutics, which enables him to scrutinise the Scripture and reveal the concordance between the two Testaments. In this spiritual intelligence we can identify the various interpretive levels of the Scripture that, with different and intersecting classifications,⁹ reveal the imminence of the coming age. In particular, the figures of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar are associated with figures from future time. Abraham represents, respectively, the priests of the Jews, the bishops, the abbots of the monasteries, the Jewish priests and the Greek bishops, the Jewish priests and the Latin bishops; Hagar is linked to the people of Israel, the lay church, the cloistered church of the converts and, in the last two ages, the Jewish synagogue; for her part, Sarah refers to the tribe of Levi, the church of the clergy, the church of the monks, the Greek church and, finally, the Latin church.

In the last two final meanings (the sixth and the seventh of the series of seven, and the eleventh and twelfth of the series of twelve), Joachim introduces profound novelties. In the penultimate he identifies Abraham with the prelates of the second and third status, Hagar with the church of the “labourers”, and Sarah with the church of the “quiescent”, which will take shape in the “sabbatum”

7 Joachim of Fiore, *Enchiridion super Apocalypsim*, trans. E. K. Burger (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986), 754-762, fol. 22r-22v. “Nunc de concordia Testamentorum agendum est, ut qualiter Testamento veteri novum respondeat videamus, et tanto magis intentio Spiritus qui auctor est hujus libri enineat, quanto veteribus nova concordare et veluti ex eisdem subsistere et consonare sentimus. Si secundum quod se mutuis vultibus duo, quae scriptura saepe commemorat, Testamenta respiciunt, concordiam assignare volueris, primus temporis cursus a Jacob incohendus est et terminandus in Christo, secundus a Christo usque ad finem saeculi, quando rursus ad faciendum iudicium venturus est in gloria Christus”.

8 Joachim of Fiore, *Tractatus super quatuor Evangelia* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 2002), 1.3, 21-22. “Tenet firmiter sancta mater ecclesia duas esse personas deitatis, quarum una ingenita, altera unigenita est, esse vero et tertiam, que ab utraque procedit. Et ob hoc et secundum hoc de littera prioris testamenti nata esse ostenditur littera novi et ex utraque procedere unus spiritalis intellectus”.

9 See Joachim of Fiore, *Psalterium Decem Chordarum* (Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva, 1964), fols. 262r-264r.

of the people of God in the third status. Here, Joachim affirms that “the meaning of Peter must pass and the meaning of John must remain (...) so that, after the lesser good has passed, what is greater can be established in its place”.¹⁰ Those who fought correctly in the second status, under the sign of Peter, will receive their reward in the kingdom, but must then give way to the more perfect. At this point, through the exegetical method, a first most novel affirmation is established: the spiritual church of John will take the place of the church of Peter. The metaphor that Joachim uses to explain the passage from one status to another is that of metals: bronze, silver and gold pertain to every age; however, if, after the age of bronze has ended, bronze should be offered again when it is time to offer silver, this offer should be rejected.

This idea is very important, and Joachim qualifies it by stating that bronze (or silver) should only be rejected in the subsequent status if the metal offered is of the *modality* of the corresponding status. In this regard he affirms that:

let us never in the second status consider rejected the conjugal life (“dicamus reprobata vitam coniugalem”) in which the first parents lived; however, imitation of Abraham is clearly rejected due to the fact that he had two wives at the same time.¹¹

Similarly, in the third status of the monastic church, which is present in the current age, the silver of the ministry of the bishop should ennoble its status in the third age, and should not disappear, even though its nature of silver is maintained. This implies that priests and laymen will continue to exist in the third age, but with the quality linked to the third status. Finally, in the last analogy with types, bronze, silver and gold are merged. Accordingly, Abraham represents all the prelates from the beginning to the end of time; Hagar, the synagogue and that part of the church of the second status that pertains to Peter; and Sarah, that part of the church of the second state that pertains to John, and the entire church of the third age that also pertains to John. For this reason, in “the third status there will be only the church of those who rest; in the second, part of the labourers and part of those who rest”.¹² Here, we can interpret that, of the church of the present time, only the part that pertains to John will remain, while the meaning of Peter must be superseded and the age of the beloved apostle must begin.

10 Joachim of Fiore, *Psalterium*, fol. 265r. “Necesse est enim ut transeat significatum Petri et maneat significatum Ioannis (...) sed reprobatur precedens quod bonum secundum partem ut statuatur subsequens quod perfectius est (...) transeunte minori bono, statuatur illi quod maius est”.

11 Ibid, fol. 265v.

12 Ibid, fol. 265v. “In tertio [status] sola erit ecclesia quiescentium. In secundo pars una laborantium est. Altera vero quiescentium”.

It is thus concluded that nothing new happens in history, but that everything is repeated, in itself indicating a concordance between past and future;¹³ and that when history begins again, it does so with increasing intensity and importance, as it approaches its fullness and its end. The elements of concordance indicate the same things (“idipsum”), but they also have potential for discontinuity, as indicated by the identification of the third age, which is born with the “*intelligentia spiritualis*”. Joachim even hypothesises that the same character or institution may have different meanings according to which of the three ages of history they pertain to (“*pertinere ad*”). This aspect reveals the essential dialectic of Joachim’s exegesis in a text of extreme importance that the Anagni Commission debated at length:

In this work [*Concordia*], after having built the altar of the Old Testament through the gift of Almighty God, removing and placing over it the water of the New Testament, we should unite them as if a wheel were joined (“*infra*”) with another wheel for concordance, to await the invisible Spirit who comes from on high and sends, as if from the third heaven. its spiritual fire, so that, coming from what is perfect, what is partial will disappear (“*evacuetur*”).¹⁴

One understands that the whole of Joachim's exegesis and his conception of the three ages of history rest on the word “*evacuetur*”. His hypothesis is that a dialectical interpretation of the three ages of history can be achieved through the concordance between the two Testaments: each status enters the following status and is transformed, merging with it; finally, somehow, it is revived in a fuller form in the status that follows it. In this way, it disappears and appears at the same time; it disappears to make way for the new status that begins, and appears in the sense that it merges, becoming exalted, with that new age. The three *tempus* appear as wheels closely connected to each other, in which one comes after another, each superseding the other. In this way, the imminence of the future age takes on new force, since it is already present in the precursors who live in the previous age but which pertain substantially to the future *tempus*.

13 See Henry Mottu, *La manifestazione*, 91-102; see. Andrea Tagliapietra, “Il ‘Prisma’ gioachimita. Introduzione all’opera di Gioacchino da Fiore” in *Sull’Apocalisse*, ed. Andrea Tagliapietra (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2008), 22-26.

14 Joachim of Fiore, *Concordia*, fol. 7 rb. “Oportet inquam nos in hoc opere altare testamenti prioris pro dono omnipotentis dei ordinate componere, fundentes et statuente in super aquam novi testamenti, alius inter aliud, ac si rotam infra rotam inesse per concordiam videatur, invisibilem autem spiritum exspectare desuper, qui veluti de tertio celo ignem suum dirigat spiritalem, ut veniente eo quod perfectus est, evacuetur quod ex parte est”.

III. THE IMMINENCE OF THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT

The crux of the question about Joachim of Fiore's heterodoxy revolves around the continuity between the second and third ages of history. However, disagreement seems to be inevitable on this subject. While the German school, including Buonaiuti, advocates for an interpretation that accepts the arrival of an "ecclesia spiritualis" without continuity with the hierarchical Church, the Italian school usually defends Joachim's orthodoxy.¹⁵ Greater understanding of this question is suggested by the relations that Joachim assigns to the three orders (lay, clergy, and monks), and the three ages of history, pertaining to the three divine persons and the Trinity itself.

In Book II of the *Psalterium*, through a series of speculations on the number 150 (which represents the number of psalms and is the earthly image of the action of history),¹⁶ the history of humanity is divided from the Creation to the final Parousia into three large blocks of 50 generations each. In a series of compositions and numerical calculations with their relative parallels between the Old and New Testaments, Joachim at last finds a tripartite cyclical series: obedience to priests; preaching; and, finally, prayer in anticipation of God's call.¹⁷ According to this order, the laity belong to the first *tempus*, the clergy to the second, and the monks to the third. Each age of life is associated with a major activity, even though it must partake of the three occupations that correspond to the three persons of the Trinity: the Father corresponds to work; the Son, to teaching, and the Holy Spirit, to the psalmody. In this way, Joachim proceeds to finally apply this ternary model of human life to the tripartition of history according to the Trinity. It is then possible to compare the married laity to children ("pueris"), clergymen to adults ("iuvenibus") and monks to the elderly ("senibus").¹⁸ Following the trinitarian model, God's people advance in the same way, towards the most desired status: "In a first *tempus*, there was the manifest revelation only of the Father; in a second, that of the Son; and in a third, that of the Holy Spirit".¹⁹ The first people were led to a general understanding of God the Father ("perductus ad qualiscumque noticiam"); the second, the Christian people, to a better understanding of the

15 See Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence*, 129. "On the one hand stand the Germans, Dempf, Grundmann, Benz, and, to a certain extent, Huck, together with the Italian Buonaiuti, maintaining that Joachim envisaged an *Ecclesia Spiritualis*, without clergy or sacraments, although possibly not without an 'Angelic Pope'. On the other side, Joachim's eager band of Italian champions rush to defence".

16 Joachim of Fiore, *Psalterium*, fol. 243v.

17 Ibid, fol. 244r.

18 Ibid, fol. 246r.

19 Ibid, fol. 246r. "In primo tempore solius patris manifesta revelatio facta fuerit: secundum filii; tertio Spiritus Sancti".

Father and the Son (“adoptionem notitiam patris et filii”); and the third must be led to a fuller (“plenius”) knowledge of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, that is, of the entire Trinity.²⁰

Joachim's *modus operandi* now becomes clearer: the three orders are linked to the three persons of the Trinity, after which the three persons and the orders are linked with the three *tempus* or status of history. As Potestà sagely notes, the three orders do not coincide exactly with the three status of history: “the trinitarian dynamic is in direct relation to the dynamic of the orders, while the three status represent a kind of tripartite scene in which this relationship takes shape”.²¹ In this way, the status have a beginning and an end in the course of history, according to the number of generations that pertain to them, while the orders never cease to exist until the end of history. In this, they exactly mirror the Trinity, which acts in different ways and to different degrees in all ages. The three orders pertain to the other status with characteristics of one of the other two orders: this is why the order of the clerics has already risen in the age of the Father, with Moses and Aaron, as has the order of the monks, with Elijah and Elisha. However, if we consider each order with respect to its fullness, things change: the order of the spouses, which began with Adam, was splendidly manifested in Abraham; that of the clergy appeared with Moses and reached its fullness with Jesus and the apostles; that of the monks began with Elijah or, rather, Saint Benedict, and “now is the time provided by God for the light to come to enlighten all those who are in the house”.²²

That is why the monastic order has a two-fold beginning in history: to reflect the origin in the Holy Spirit of both the Father (Elijah and Elisha) and the Son (Saint Benedict). This reflection of the Trinity in history is also seen in the coming of the last Sabbath in concordance with the third status of history. The first Sabbath was given to the children of Israel when they reached the Promised Land; the second was given to the Church in the days of Saint John the Evangelist; and in the future the faithful will have their own Sabbath when, once the fatigue of the preaching has ended, they will be offered rest. This same doctrine is found in the *Concordia*, which affirms that the third status draws near (“e vicino expectamus”).²³

20 Ibid, fol. 247v.

21 Gian Luca Potestà, *El tiempo del Apocalipsis* (Madrid: Trotta, 2010), 129.

22 Joachim of Fiore, *Psalterium*, fol. 253v. “Iam nunc deo propitio tempus est ut ad lucem veniat: ut luceat omnibus qui in domo sunt”.

23 Joachim of Fiore, *Concordia*, fol. 112rb. Regarding the parallel wording between *Psalterium* and *Concordia* and the doctrine of the three “status”, see Gian Luca Potestà, *El tiempo*, 145-146; 194.

All Joachim's complicated generational calculations, which fill whole pages in both the *Psalterium* and the *Concordia*, in addition to wanting to demonstrate the structure of the course of the world²⁴, are aimed at demonstrating the imminent revelation of the people of the third status. In the *Psalterium*, we also find a description of a feature in the union of the various trinitarian divisions according to which the last three characters in each stage (in this case, a decade) take shape as first three in the following decade, in this way linking one age with the other and, in fact, one status with another.²⁵ In some way, each status already appears in its previous status in anticipation of what will follow; for this reason, Joachim considers Zacharias, John the Baptist and the man Jesus as the characters in whom the time of the law was fulfilled (“consummaret tempus legis”) and when the time of grace will begin (“inciperet gratie”).²⁶

In order to shape a coherent generational scale, Joachim is forced to make certain adjustments so that the numbers of the characters agree with the generations that follow one after another. For the Italian theologian, the most important thing is to ensure that the three people of the Trinity are present in each generational decade. When the calculation of the generations in the Old Testament ends, the generations in the New divide into two different branches, pertaining to the Son and the Holy Spirit respectively, although Joachim is quick to stress that this is a single path through two modes.²⁷ Joachim's continuous adjustments are explained by his determination to demonstrate that both the Son and the Holy Spirit are perfectly recognisable in each generation. Finally, the conclusion he suggests demonstrates that the first fifty generations end with Zerubbabel and that, accordingly, the first status ends in concomitance with the restoration of the freedom of the people of Israel and their consequent return to Jerusalem and the fall of Babylon.

Calculation of the generations pertaining to the second status in the New Testament is hard and laborious (“durum et laboriosum”). It is enough for Joachim to affirm that the second status will begin on the fulfilment of forty generations after Jesus Christ (similar to the forty days of Lent, or fifty generations after Abihud can also be calculated). This period will begin within a shorter time (“curtus”) than the first, as one generation of the Church lasts thirty years and we are already in the fiftieth; Joachim warns that, just as the end of the first fifty

24 Herbert Grundmann, *Studi su Gioacchino*, 75.

25 Joachim of Fiore, *Psalterium*, fol. 272r.

26 Ibid, fol. 272r.

27 Ibid, fol. 275r. “No duabus semitis sed una duobus modis”.

generations was marked by the fall of Babylon, the fall of New Babylon is near. For this reason, he advises us to flee from it (“fugiant de medio eius”).

Before the third status of the Holy Spirit (the entry into the “sancta sanctorum”) begins, there will be two tribulations: the destruction of Babylon and the punishment of the Church for its sins by the Antichrist. Joachim affirms that he does not know the duration of the generations pertaining to the status of the Holy Spirit: these generations may last days, or months, or years;²⁸ nonetheless, he seems to indicate that they will have a shorter duration than those in the other two status. The imminence of the last age of history is the most characteristic element in the doctrine of Joachim of Fiore and the one that has since exercised the greatest influence.

IV. PETER, JOHN AND THE IMMINENCE OF THE SIXTH STAGE

Joachim’s theories, discussed above, should be complemented by his interpretation of the *Apocalypse*, in two works particularly: the *Prefatio* and the *Expositio*. The numbers five and seven seem to be of great importance when it comes to revealing the deepest meanings of these works. The number five, particularly, refers to the five orders of history: firstly, the order of the apostles, followed by those of the martyrs, the confessors, the virgins and contemplative hermits and, finally, the universal order, formed by monks, the “viri spiritualis” who fight against the evil of the world.²⁹ On the other hand, there are seven ages, the last pertaining to the universal Church (“generalis ecclesie”) and extending into present time. For this reason, the judgement of evil (“ad iniquorum reservatur iudicium”) will take place and the Jewish people will be converted in the sixth *tempus*. Here, Joachim introduces the presence of a period of peace in the midst of a double tribulation. He considers the seven seals as the seven mysteries of the passion (“septe sunt misteria passionum”), so that the two passions come together at the same time in the sixth *tempus*.³⁰ He then warns that the time of the great tribulation has come.³¹ Joachim sees the “viri spiritualis” as the bastions of the ecclesiastical defence, those that will resist the Antichrist: in fact, he says, Babylon means the Christian people who in reality are not

28 Ibid, fol. 276v.

29 Joachim of Fiore, *Praephatio super Apocalypsim* (Introduzione all’Apocalisse), trans. Gian Luca Potestà; Kurt-Victor Selge (Roma: Viella, 1995), 46. “Quinta de spiritualium zelo virorum, quibus est contra mundi scelera, que oculis suis cernunt, conflictus”.

30 Ibid, 55.

31 Ibid, 48. “Tempus tribulationis magne ecce appropinquat omnimodo”.

Christian, but profane holy things³². In this sense, the Sabbath he foresees is the presence of God, compared to a tabernacle among His own people, and which is clearly distinguished from subsequent events such as the Resurrection and the Judgment Day.³³

The second work, the *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, Joachim's great exegesis of the Apocalypse, represents the most enormous literary effort that the Calabrian abbot ever undertook: the work abundantly surpasses both the *Concordia* and the *Psalterium* in size alone. The time of the Apocalypse has come, and Joachim links it to various events in his time. The elements that we consider most relevant for our study are as follows: a deepening of the relationship between Peter and John; an interpretation of the seven seals announcing the entry into the sixth age of history; and the imminent events that will lead to the seventh and final age.

Regarding the relationship between Peter and John, we again find in the *Expositio in Apocalypsim* the features that we had already seen in the *Psalterium*, enriched by new interpretations: John is a model of the Holy Spirit and represents the order of contemplatives, while Peter is a model of Christ.³⁴ In Asia, John was at the head of the seven churches of the Apocalypse while Peter travelled towards Rome. The seven churches received the inheritance of the Holy Spirit, the other five, the inheritance of Christ. Peter was chosen by the Holy Spirit, while John was the beloved disciple of Christ. John outlived Peter by several years, and there was a time when Peter devoted himself to apostolic activity at the same time as John; on the other hand, John was alive without Peter for a period, as he lived longer than his fellow disciple.³⁵ Joachim acknowledges that it is difficult to determine which of the two has the advantage over the other, but this last piece of information leads to an important conclusion: the second status ends with Peter, while John is present in both the second and the third.³⁶

That is why the entry of the two disciples into the tomb is powerfully symbolic: Peter enters the tomb first, although John arrives before him. Accordingly, Peter represents the clerics of the second status (“clericis designatis in Petro”), while John represents the monks (“verumetiam et

32 Ibid, 62. “Babilon est populus, qui dicitur christianus, sed non est, qui contaminat terram domini et polluit sancta”.

33 See Ibid, 63-65.

34 Joachim of Fiore, *Expositio*, fol. 47v. “Cum in primo eorum [Petrus] clara sit et manifesta similitudo filii: sicut in secundum Spiritus Sancti”.

35 Ibid, “Verumtamen quem nunquam Petrus in officio apostolatus fuit sine Joane: Joanes vero fuit sine Petro: et longo post eum tempore in hac vita permansit”.

36 Ibid, fol. 141v; fol. 143r.

monachis designatis in Joanne”). Once the woes of the first order (the clerics) end, the order that signifies John will emerge from that preaching.³⁷ As Reeves notes, this was one of the passages that generated the most interest among Joachim's radical followers; beside a manuscript of the *Expositio*, a copier wrote “Clerus consumabitur”.³⁸ We should note that Joachim never advocated the disappearance of the order of the clergy since, as we have seen, each order participates to a different extent in each corresponding status. As we have seen, then, the third status and its corresponding order will not mean—at least at this stage of Joachim’s doctrinal development—the end of the principle of authority in the Church, but rather a predominance of monastic life within it. It is not a question of liberation from authority and the two Testaments, but of a spiritual knowledge that emanates from both texts of the Scripture.

In the tribulation that precedes the fullness of the third status, Peter will follow Christ, and only part of the Church will be identified with John (“reliquentur autem pars illa [Petri] electorum that designata est in Joanne”). The succession of Peter will then take place, embodied in the “viri spiritualis” of the order of the monks (“ad quam opus transire totam Petri successionem”).³⁹

Another very important aspect is the interpretation of the seven seals seen by John, which would seem to be the seven tribulations suffered by the people of God, from Abraham to the consummation of the Church. The first seal concerns the order of the apostles, refers to the persecution of the Jewish synagogue and is symbolised by the first head of the apocalyptic dragon. The second links the order of the martyrs to the tribulation of the pagans in Rome, symbolised by Nero, persecuted until the peace of Constantine and Silvester. The third refers to the doctors and the tribulation of the Arians.⁴⁰ The fourth corresponds to the tribulation of the order of the hermits and virgins at the hands of the Muslims; the fourth head of the dragon is that of Muhammad. The fifth concerns the Church of Rome and the tribulation is brought about by corrupt members of the Church (in the *Liber Figurarum*, this again corresponds to an attack by the Muslims). Regarding the sixth, as previously mentioned, Joachim affirms that we are in this historical moment.⁴¹ Here there will be a double tribulation: firstly, the persecution of Saladin (although later Joachim was not so sure); and, secondly, the persecution of the “maximus Antichristus”. The

37 Ibid, fol. 142r-v.

38 See Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence*, 139.

39 Joachim of Fiore, *Expositio*, fol. 83r.

40 Ibid, fol. 123r-153r.

41 Ibid, fol. 6v. “Presentes dies in quibus, initiata apertione sexti sigilli, percutienda est Nova Babilonia”.

Church will be shaken by internal scandals; the monks will have a highly deficient contemplative life; only the Church of the saints will remain, but will have to hide, doing penance, full of remorse for the grave sins of the Church; iniquity will reign and terrible signs will appear in Heaven and on Earth.⁴²

The hosts of the Antichrist, possibly formed by the two beasts that come out of the sea and the land, identified with Islam and Western heretics,⁴³ will throw themselves against the Church for the 42 months mentioned by Daniel (“complebitur etiam id quod scriptum est in Daniele propheta”) until Christ defeats the power of the Antichrist. Between the two persecutions of the sixth tribulation, Joachim places the mark with the seal of the living God (“signo cruces fideles”) until the number of the chosen ones is reached. In this margin of time between the first and second tribulation of the sixth seal, a time of penance and conversion, we also find the arrival of the mighty angel referred to in the Apocalypse.⁴⁴ This angel is described as one of the “viri spiritualis” who descends from the contemplative life to the active life and is the link between the second and third status.⁴⁵

Finally, the two witnesses who will preach for 1,260 days before the beast kills them, after which God resurrects them, are introduced; in *Revelations* they appear just after the mighty angel. Joachim does not consider the interpretations of Hieronymus and Pope Gregory I, who identify them with Enoch and Elijah, satisfactory. Nor is the Calabrian abbot satisfied by the solution of replacing Enoch with Moses.⁴⁶ In Joachim’s view, these interpretations are “opinio” and not “intelligentia”. The identification with Enoch and Elijah must be spiritual. Finally, Joachim suggests that they can be identified with the rest of the orders of the clerics and monks during the persecution of the Antichrist. After preaching among the false Christians, they will be overcome by the Antichrist.

After these events, after Christ has finally defeated the beast, which seems to rise again at one point (Joachim identifies this unexpected resurgence with the Muslim threat, which once again endangered the peace of Christians), the sabbatical age begins. This age corresponds to the third status, which Joachim describes as a “rationabilis opinio”, the fruit of a “serenissimus intellectus”.⁴⁷

42 Ibid, fol. 118r-120r.

43 Ibid, fol. 210v.

44 See Apoc. 10:1-7.

45 Joachim of Fiore, *Expositio*, fol. 141v.

46 Ibid, fol. 146r-147v.

47 Ibid, fol. 210v-211r.

The description of the seventh age is somewhat vague; Joachim does not enter into its contents in great depth, although he affirms that there is less time to wait for its arrival (“longe minus”) and that in some way it is already present after the sixth age. This is due, particularly, to the presence of the order of the monks, which is becoming perfected (“septimam etatem inchoatam esse pariter cum sexta”).⁴⁸ Generally speaking, the seventh age is characterised by an extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which attains the perfection required by the Gospel, and by the predominance of the “monachorum” order within the Church, which will achieve an understanding never before reached of the “intelligentia spiritualis”.

The peace of the Seventh Day Church will be disturbed by the last persecution of Gog and Magog, who is not the Antichrist (“non videatur iste Gog esse ipsum Antichristum”), but deceives the nations of the world. Gog and Magog may be the most important soldier in the Antichrist's army (“magis princeps exercitus eius”).⁴⁹ Finally, the devil will be thrown into the eternal fire (“stagnum ignis”) together with the beast and the false prophet. The eighth age then emerges, with the resurrection of the bodies for eternal blessedness or eternal damnation. This is the conclusion of the story, with the ascension to the heavenly Jerusalem, when God will be seen as He is and the whole truth will be known (“videntibus nobis eum sicuti est et scientibus in eo omnem veritatem”).

V. THE RADICALISATION OF THE *TRACTATUS*

The *Tractatus super quatuor Evangelia* is usually considered as one of Joachim's minor works, ranked below those we discuss above. However, the date of its composition (between 1200 and 1202) makes the *Tractatus* his last work, the final stage in shaping his doctrine. This alone would suffice to explain its importance. But, what is even more, the *Tractatus* seems to represent an undeniable radicalisation of Joachim's doctrine. In his study, Mottu also reaches the same conclusion, noting that Joachim “redirects Christian hope towards hope of the coming of the Holy Spirit symbolised by Elijah, reducing the second coming of the Son to a past event.”⁵⁰

In the first place, it seems appropriate to note the change that occurs to the relationship between Peter and John and which, in the final outcome, also affects

48 Ibid, fol. 211r.

49 Ibid, fol. 211r.

50 Henry Mottu, *La manifestazione*, 40-41.

the future dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Here, the figure of Saint Simeon the Elder plays a prominent symbolic role. This righteous man awaited the redemption of Israel, and the Holy Spirit dwelt with him. He was drawn to the temple by the Holy Spirit and there, taking Jesus in his arms, he sang the celebrated *Nunc Dimittis*.⁵¹ According to Joachim, the Baby Jesus signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit that engenders the order of the monks, while Simeon represents the clerics of the Roman Church.⁵² This passage on Simeon the Elder is related to two texts referring to Peter. In the first, Simeon is linked to Peter's mission of persevering in the faith: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not".⁵³

Peter's successors work to see the completion of what he preaches ("Petri successio affectat videre completum quod predicat"), which will occur at the moment when the Holy Spirit is given to the Christian people with the arrival of Elijah, as they will rejoice in the new order that the spiritual Church will engender ("sanctum illum ordinem quem ecclesia peperit spiritalis") and will welcome it with faith and love ("accipiet eum in ulnas fidei et dilectionis sue") and proclaim that in this order resides the life-giving Spirit ("in eo esse illum vivificantem Spiritum in quo est salus mundo"). Before analysing the second phrase referring to Peter, the "evangelium eternum" that John had seen in Revelations is cited. This Gospel, which will be preached in the end times, signifies the suppression of the sacraments:

But why does the Lord call it the "gospel of the kingdom" or John the "eternal gospel" if not because what we were commanded by Christ or the apostles according to the faith of the sacraments is, as regards the sacraments themselves, transitory and temporary, while what they signify is eternal?⁵⁴

Joachim slowly comes to define the change in the dispensation that will occur in the passage between Peter and John, symbols of the second and third orders, respectively. The second phrase that Joachim uses in this context is Christ's prophecy about the death of Peter: "When you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and take you where you do not want to go."⁵⁵ Peter's old age will be followed by a new impulse that will lead the Church where

51 Lk 2:25-30.

52 Joachim of Fiore, *Tractatus*, I.6. "In ipso 'puero Iesu' donum Spiritus sancti cum ordine monachorum (...) itaque senex 'iustus et timoratus' Romane presules designat ecclesie".

53 Lk 22:32.

54 Joachim of Fiore, *Tractatus*, I.6. "Sed quare vel a Domino dicitur 'evangelium regni' vel a Iohanne 'evangelium eternum', nisi quia illud, quod mandatum est nobis a Christo vel apostolis secundum fidem sacramentorum, quantum ad ipsa sacramenta transitorium est et temporale, quod autem per ea significatur, 'eternum'?"

55 Jn. 21:18.

it did not want to go of its own volition, that is to say, towards the future “ecclesia spiritualis”. The Church of Peter must then disappear and give way to the new order that will sustain it and lead it to its consummation. Like Simeon, who held the Baby Jesus in his arms, so the successors of Peter (“successores Petri”), who were entrusted to discern between the sacred and the profane, will uphold (“sustainbit”) the new order with their authority and words (“auctoritatis sue et confirmabit verbis testimonii sui”). In this sense, the “dissolutio” of the Church of Peter is the condition of the “successio” of the Church of John:

In fact, [the Church of Peter's successors] will not be able to suffer from its dissolution since it will know that it will be maintained in a better succession. For we know that it is the property of the religious form of life and not the diversity of faith that causes one order to be designated in the predecessor and another in its successor. When an order begins to be consecrated, it retains the same name as long as there does not cease to be a succession in the same form. If, on the other hand, some come out of them that - having assumed a better form - become better and it is no longer said that they belong to the same order but to another which proceeds from that, perhaps those who see that they are succeeded by such a fruit can be hurt, as they are succeeded by a universal perfection where a particular perfection ceases to exist? May this not be, may it not be that this occurs to the successors of Peter, who are consumed in envy of the perfection of the spiritual order, which will appear to be one spirit with God and to walk according to his doctrine along all the paths of his commandments. Rather, they will become exulted and say: “Now, Lord, you can, according to your word, allow your servant to depart in peace, because my eyes have seen your salvation, that which you prepared before all peoples”.⁵⁶

In this passage, Joachim seems to advocate a conversion of the Church, which should give way to the spiritual Church. Peter will maintain his character of authority, but on this occasion only to indicate the “ecclesia spiritualis” as the

56 Joachim of Fiore, *Tractatus*, I.6. “Neque enim super dissolutionem suam poterit dolere, cum se in meliori successione permanere cognoscet. Scimus enim quod, ut alius ordo designetur in precessore alius in successore, non facit diversitas fidei sed proprietates religionis. Cum enim aliquis ordo incipit esse solemniter, tamdiu ordo ipse servat idem nomen, quamdiu in eadem forma non desinit esse successio. Si autem aliqui egrediuntur ex eo qui, assumpta altera meliori forma, commutantur in melius, iam non dicitur esse eiusdem ordinis sed alterius procedentis ex eo. Sed num qui talem sibi fructum intuetur succedere, dolere potest, quia desinit esse in se particularis perfectio, ubi succedit universalis? Absit, absit hoc, absit hoc a Petri successione; absit ut tabescat invidia super perfectione ordinis spiritualis, quem videbit esse unum spiritum cum Deo suo et ambulare secundum doctrinam suam in omnibus semitis mandatorum suorum. Quin potius letabundus exultabit et dicet: “Nunc dimittis, Domine, servum tuum, secundum verbum tuum in pace, quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum, quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum”.

true Church and its perfect consummation. In reality, Peter is destined to pass away, to dissolve, to disappear into the new order that will finally govern the Church. More than an ascendant progress, this appears to be a convergence of the successors of Peter in the Church of John, to the point where Peter can no longer be recognised, as he will be completely absorbed by John. According to Reeves, this is the “most damaging point in relation to his orthodoxy, all the more so because St.Peter in some passages clearly stands for the Papacy”⁵⁷

Another character of great interest in the *Tractatus* and whom Joachim uses to radicalise issues that we have seen previously is John the Baptist. As Mottu observes,⁵⁸ John represents the age of the imperfect, pilgrim, clerical Church, while Jesus represents the spiritual age of the Church. John represents the *interim* between the imperfect age of Christianity and the arrival of its future perfection. In this context, Joachim tries to apply to the four Gospels a series of progressive ages in history in which the figure of John the Baptist will become very important.⁵⁹ In the first place, four *tempus* are assigned to the four Gospels (“*ipsa quatuor evangelia IIII temporibus assignare*”). In the first, the Gospel of Saint Matthew, is placed the whole of the Old Testament which announced the birth of the Saviour. In the Gospel of Saint Luke, which narrates the infancy of Jesus, we find the doctrine of the “nursing” Church (“*doctrina lactentis Ecclesiae*”), which begins with John the Baptist and advances in time (“*per intervalla temporum pervenit ad incrementum usque ad hec tempora nostra*”). In the Gospel of Saint Mark, devoted to the perfect age of Christ, that is to say, his preaching, we find the spiritual doctrine (“*doctrina spiritualis*”), which will begin with the coming of Elijah and will endure until the end of time. Finally, the Gospel of Saint John will reveal the ineffable wisdom (“*sapientia illa ineffabilis*”) that will shape the future *tempus*.

As we can see, then, John the Baptist occupies a privileged place: he begins the development towards the “*doctrina spiritualis*” that Elijah represents. As Mottu so rightly exclaims: “So it is not Jesus who constitutes the origin of historical Christianity – it is John the Baptist!”⁶⁰ The figure of Christ is divided into two: firstly, the “*puer*” Jesus who intervenes in the age of John the Baptist; and, secondly, the adult Christ (“*perfecti Christi etate*”), who introduces the “*doctrina spiritualis*”.

57 Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence*, 131.

58 Henry Mottu, *La manifestazione*, 131-142.

59 See Joachim of Fiore, *Tractatus*, 1.1.

60 Henry Mottu, *La manifestazione*, 133.

However, this spiritual doctrine is not yet the culmination of history. The “sapientia ineffabilis”, which will lead the Church from adulthood to consummation, has yet to arrive. Here, Christ must be superseded in a dynamic ascent of the Church towards the perfection of its wisdom. This dialectic, which divides Jesus Christ into two historical moments, is a model that Joachim proposes in order to explain more fully how the ages come one after the other. Each status already contains the advent of the future status and, in some way, when the subsequent status begins, the previous one is enveloped into that more perfect status. This is how we should interpret John the Baptist’s baptism in water and Christ’s baptism of fire: the former represents the place where we are now (“ibi sumus”), while the latter represents what is to come (“ibi futurus sumus”). Gradually, what is to come is manifested, and the orders that appear in history behave in the same way. John the Baptist represents the order of clergy that disappears to make way for the “viris spiritualis” that Christ represents. As this work of inception takes place, so the order of the clergy is superseded and fleeting, and the more the order that Christ comes to herald in appears in its splendour: “The more this world draws to its end, the more despicable that which is signified by John becomes, and the more clear and sublime that which is signified by Christ”.⁶¹

The coming of Christ marks the beginning of another history, one that announces the coming of the end of history itself. It heralds the end of times, but still represents a transition towards what is truly the end, that is, the appearance of the “ecclesia spiritualis”. When Joachim applies “intelligentia spiritualis” to the four gospels, a mystery intrinsic to history is revealed once more: that each age both contains and engenders what will be the fullness of the subsequent period. This is the relationship between John the Baptist and Christ; John represents the previous world, the world of the “littera”, while Christ announces the world that is to come. However, Christ is not the end of history, but the beginning of another history – the history of the Spirit.⁶² As mentioned, the John the Baptist of the third status is Saint Benedict, who has come to bring the “ordo monachorum” to fruition. Joachim insists on this subject, affirming that the order of clerics represented by John the Baptist offers men an inferior doctrine, while the spiritual men who offer a higher doctrine will be able to

61 Joachim of Fiore, *Tractatus*, 1.7. “Quo mundus iste appropinquat ad finem, eo despicibilis esse incipit quod significatur in Iohanne, clarius vero et sublimius quod significatur in Christo”.

62 Henry Mottu, *La manifestazione*, 139.

cleanse men completely.⁶³ For this reason, the very sacrament of baptism is not the sacrament known in the Church today, but signifies those among the baptised who have received the Holy Spirit and in whom it still dwells.⁶⁴

The figure of Elijah, a prophet whose return before the end of time is prophesied by Malachi, also merits more in-depth consideration; Elijah's mission will be that of guiding the Jewish people back to the faith required to meet the Messiah. Joachim links the return of Elijah to the restoration of all things and the conversion of the Jewish people:

It is written that "Elijah comes and will restore all things." In fact, Elijah will find almost all things corrupt and dark, as we ourselves see them; however, as in another time he rebuilt with new stones the altar that had been destroyed, so the Holy Spirit, that he himself represents, through him and others, that he will gather near the altar, will re-establish the tortuous steps and will level the narrow places. In faith, the Greeks preceded, the Latins followed them and, finally, they will be followed by the Jews.⁶⁵

Besides fulfilling the messianic promise of the return of the Jewish people to the bosom of the Church, Elijah also symbolises in some way the advent of the third status as a figure of the "ordo monachorum" and, in short, a precursor of the third status:

This great Elijah who must return to fulfil all things has originated the monastic and hermitic life; And as the letter of the Old Testament is especially related to the order of the laity and that of the New Testament to the order of the clergy, so the order of the monks is related to spiritual intelligence.⁶⁶

63 Joachim of Fiore, *Tractatus*, 1.6. "Sacerdotes simplices abluimus homines inferiori doctrina que vocatur littera, sed spiritales viri, qui pro eo quod fugiunt inanem gloriam plerumque latitant inter nos et non sunt tanti nominis quanti nos sumus, abluent homines doctrina spiritali".

64 Ibid, 1.6. "Igitur etsi magni sunt qui baptizant et magni nominis apud homines, plerumque tamen maiores sunt apud Deum hii qui baptizantur, non quidem omnes qui baptizantur, sed super quos descendit Spiritus et manet super eos. Et qui sunt illi? Haud dubium illi, quos expellit Spiritus sanctus in desertum, ut temptentur a diabolo".

65 Ibid, 1.16. "Scriptum est: Helias venturus est et restituet omnia. Corrupta quippe, sicut iam cernimus, inveniet pene omnia et confusa, sed tamen, ut quondam ipsemet restituit novis lapidibus quod destructum fuerat altare, ita Spiritus sanctus, quem significat ipse, tam per eum quam per alios, quos colliget in altare, reducet prava in directa et aspera in vias planas. Precesserunt sane in fide Greci, secuti sunt Latini, et ad ultimum sequentur Hebrei".

66 Ibid, 1.9. "(...) Quia et magnus ille *Helias, qui venturus est, ut compleat omnia*, ipsam religionem monasticam sive heremiticam inchoavit. Et sicut laicorum ordini congruit specialius littera prioris testamenti, clericorum littera novi, ita monachorum ordini spiritalis convenit intellectus".

The return of Elijah serves a dual purpose: to give life to the “ordo monachorum” in the third status; and to bring the conversion of the Jewish people to fruition. In fact, the two missions are closely related. According, also, to Paul’s preaching, the fullness of the Church will be attained when the people of the first covenant reach salvation by entering the Church. This event will bring about the consummation of the Church in the third status. The consummation of the Church will then be the work of Elijah: it will be on his arrival (“in adventu Helie”) that the present state of the Church (“presentis status ecclesie”) will be brought to fruition (*perducentur ad portum*).⁶⁷ Alluding to the story of the miraculous catch of fish and the two boats (the figures of Peter and John) left on the shore by the disciples,⁶⁸ it is announced that only John's boat will remain along with Peter, and that everything will be restored to unity, so that there is only one flock and one shepherd. The coming of Elijah will fulfil the prophecy of Jesus when he affirms that in the moment that the Holy Spirit comes, he will teach the truth in its fullness:

(...) of that time when Elijah must manifest himself and the Antichrist must persecute the Church, when the elect will clearly recognise that the coming of the Lord is near, that the Holy Spirit must come again and that the condition of the world must change, men shall cease to be concerned about those institutions that were made for the time and for a certain time (...) and they will set their hearts on that fullness of truth that Christ promised in the Holy Spirit”.⁶⁹

This fullness of the Holy Spirit, which will coincide with the coming of Elijah, will persuade the Jewish people to believe that the Holy Spirit comes from the Father and also from the Son (“filioque”) and that Peter is the successor of Jesus Christ. The unbelievers will also partake of this, producing a fullness of the Church never before attained. In the time of Elijah, the hearts of parents will be converted to children and unbelievers to the prudence of the righteous.⁷⁰ The conversion of the Jewish people to the Lord will be accomplished through Elijah and his companions (“per Heliam et eius socios”).⁷¹ In some way – and

67 Ibid, 3.16.

68 See Lk. 5:11; Jn. 21:11.

69 Joachim of Fiore, *Tractatus*, 3.16. “Igitur tempore illo in quo revelandus est Helias et seviturus in ecclesiam Antichristus, cognoscentibus manifeste electis quia prope erit adventus Domini venturi iterum in Spiritu sancto et quod mutandus sit status mundi, omittent homines zelari pro illis institutionibus, que facte sunt pro tempore et ad tempus (...) et infigent *oculum cordis* in illam plenitudinem veritatis quam promisit in Spiritu sancto”.

70 See Joachim of Fiore, *Tractatus*, 3.16. “Erit autem hoc circa tempus aut in tempore quo venturus est Helias, per cuius os ostendet Spiritus sanctus virtutem glorie sue ad convertenda *corda patrum ad filios et incredulos ad prudentiam iustorum*”.

71 See Ibid, 1.3.

in this we are in agreement with Mottu – these companions, who will assist Elijah in fulfilling his mission, should be identified with the “*viri spiritualis*” of the third status. These followers of Elijah will be distinguished by the purity of their faith (“*sinceritas verae fidei*”), which will differentiate them from carnal men. So much so that the “*viri spiritualis*” will not need to study the human doctrine (“*studium humanae doctrinae*”) but will achieve spiritual intelligence without requiring to make an ascetic effort.⁷² In fact, “the third status, which will begin with Elijah, and which rightly pertains to the Holy Spirit”,⁷³ and the “*plenitudo*” are attained specifically in this stage in history with the conversion of the Jewish people.

The hypothesis can be suggested that Joachim was thinking of Saint Benedict as the figure of Elijah in the third status, the precursor of monastic life. We have already seen how Joachim frequently connects these two characters. Moreover, there are two texts that point in this direction in the *Tractatus*. In the first, the Virgin Mary designates the monastic life instituted by Saint Benedict to engender a people of saints who shall reign in the Holy Spirit until the end of time.⁷⁴ In the second, Elijah and Benedict are linked as men to whom the Holy Spirit has been given in a most special way and whose order will last until the end of the world.⁷⁵ It is interesting to remember that, later, the spiritual Franciscans identified Elijah with Saint Francis of Assisi.⁷⁶

Mottu⁷⁷ notes that Elijah's work will restore the Holy Spirit to children. This *restitutio* is a veritable revolution, one in which, besides the restoration (“*restitutio*”) of the Church, the inversion of values and power is announced, engendering an inversion of social roles. In fact, the passing from Peter to John,

72 See Ibid, 1.9. “Siquidem animalis himo non percipit que sunt Spiritus Dei, spiritalis autem omnia iudicat et ipse a nemine iudicatur, et ut intelligent spiritalis discipuli non per stadium humane doctrine, set per sinceritatem vere fidei, posse se conscendere ad eum, cui supra se pertinent spiritalium intellectum”.

73 Ibid, 1.9. “Sane tertius status, qui incipiet ab Helia, proprie pertinet ad Spiritum sanctum”.

74 Ibid, 1.9. “Secundum autem alteram speciem Maria etate iuvenula designat monasticam religionem illam, scilicet quam sanctus instituit Benedictus, que ‘concipiens de Spiritu sancto’ habitura est et ipsa filium ‘in utero’ suo, *populum* scilicet illum *sanctorum*, cui *danda* est secundum Danielem *potestas sub omni celo* et regnaturus est in spiritu usque ad consumationem seculi”.

75 Ibid, 1.9. “(...) In quibus specialius loqueretur Spiritus sanctus, et veteri testamento demonstratur et novo. Qui ergo tantam habuerunt prerogativam gratie, ut magistrorum quoque apparent magistri, utpote in veteri Moyses et Helias, in novo Paulus, Antonius, Benedictus et ceteri perfecti patres, filii omnipotentis Dei et reges in spiritu dicti sunt, secundum quod de talium ordine, qui per successionem perseveraturus est usque in finem seculi”.

76 See Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence*, 198. “In this context of history St. Francis assumes the cosmic role of Christ Himself to wage war on Antichrist. He was the Elijah of the sixth age sent to initiate that *status evangelicus* which is and ought to be in all things *immobilis et indissolubilis*”.

77 See Henry Mottu, *La manifestazione*, 152-53.

from clergy to monks, also denotes a change in the hierarchy present in the Church. We should not be surprised, therefore, that Joachim's announcement of the imminent "plenitudo veritatis" was condemned by the Anagni Commission: "in all these passages, the attentive reader can discover how this doctrine points to the subversion of the clergy, that is, of the Roman Church and those who obey it".⁷⁸ In Joachim's defence, it is necessary to say that all his texts, by the express will of the author, have been submitted to the judgement of the ecclesiastical authority and in this case it has not been possible to portray the possible incompatibilities due to the death that occurred in 1202. We cannot rule out that the same thing could have happened with the expressions of the *Tractatus*. It is also true that Joachim was more of an exegete than a theologian⁷⁹ and some expressions used in the *Tractatus* could be affected by this circumstance. In this sense, Grundmann also finds in this position on overcoming the clergy and the sacraments the sign of Joachim's heterodoxy, although his study focuses more on the texts that precede the *Tractatus*. If it is true, as Grundmann affirms, that Joachim never declared the Church to be Babylon⁸⁰, it must be recognized that just as the Church of Christ dissolved the Synagogue, so in the third status the Church will be dissolved into a spiritual and unmediated institution⁸¹. According to Grundmann, only a naive recognition of the Catholic Church and its doctrines prevented Joachim from recognizing that his position was, in fact, a true overcoming of the Catholic worldview⁸².

On the other hand, neither can it be assumed as McGinn does that the third status did not point to "the end of the clerical order, the abolition of the sacraments, or the cessation of the papacy" when the author himself acknowledges its presence in "some unguarded phrases to be found mostly in the *Tractatus*"⁸³ for as we have seen they are not simply unguarded phrases. In the same way, Crocco's interpretation according to which Joachim's spiritualized and monasticized Church is a higher level of what already exists, not its replacement⁸⁴ does not seem to be in keeping with the texts of the

78 Heinrich S. Denifle, *Das Evangelium aeternum und die Commission zu Anagni* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1885) 1, 120. "Ex iis igitur patere potest diligenter intuenti, qualiter hec doctrina tendit finaliter ad subversionem cleri, hoc est romane ecclesie et obedientium ei".

79 Leone Tondelli, *Il libro delle figure dell'Abate Gioacchino da Fiore*, (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1954), II, 149-151.

80 Herbert Grundmann, *Studi su Gioacchino*, 111.

81 Ibid, 108.

82 Ibid, 76.

83 Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot. Joaquim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought* (New York: MacMillan, 1985), 192.

84 See Antonio Crocco, "Genesi e significato dell'Età dello Spirito nell'escatologia di Gioacchino da Fiore" in *Storia e messaggio in Gioacchino da Fiore: atti del I Congresso Internazionale*

Tractatus that have been analyzed. The content of the Tractatus represents, in this sense, a radicalisation of Joachim's positions.

VI. CONCLUSION

It is true that there is in Joachim's final work a radicalisation of certain themes that were already glimpsed in his previous texts and are the result of the novel exegesis that he proposes. The novel quality of the *Tractatus* is, it seems to us, the natural conclusion of certain ideas that had already appeared with a certain ambiguity in the *Concordia* and the *Psalterium*. The imminent coming of a new historical dispensation leads Joachim to force biblical interpretations to bend to his will to demonstrate that the events of his time foretell this transformation of the world. So it is that he announces, firstly, the “dissolutio” of the Church of Peter into the Church of John, which includes both the successors of Peter and the order of clergy that Peter embodies. Then, secondly, the dissolution of the sacraments and of the incomplete doctrine of the present Church, which will be superseded by the eternal gospel. And, finally, the substitution of Christ as the centre of history and of the Church due to the importance of Elijah as dispenser and initiator of the new age of the Holy Spirit.

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Stefano Abbate
Facultad de Comunicación, Educación y Humanidades
Universitat Abat Oliba CEU
Calle Bellesguard 30
08022 Barcelona (España)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1844-422X>

