

Florina Rodica HARIGA *

The Consequences of Joachim of Fiore's Critique to Peter the Lombard and the Reception of his Works and Methods in the Later Philosophy of the Middle Ages**

Abstract: The aim of this article is to analyze the way in which Joachim of Fiore's approach has shaped the debate regarding the doctrine of the Trinity and what were the consequences of his condemnation during the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. I am also interested to observe how his eschatological views could have influenced the Trinitarian debate and the reception of his later works by the most renowned doctors of the Church of different acceptances like Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican intellectualist, and Bonaventure, a Franciscan voluntarist. Various methods of approaching the Scripture from allegory and symbolism to dialectics and epistemology all of them have a common direction in offering a sense and a model that could lead to achieving salvation and the real knowledge regarding God and the divine essence. In seeking theoretical knowledge and epistemic certainties one observes that always the real aim of the initial research was all the way a practical one that expressed the way to perfection and the human model capable to achieve salvation according to the signs present in the history of the world.

Keywords: Joachim of Fiore, eschatology, Peter the Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, doctrine of the Trinity, medieval philosophy.

The hermeneutical exercise applied to the works of Joachim of Fiore is faced with a new understanding of considering the genetic approach of Joachim's theology. In this sense, one has to consider that the work of the abbot is submitted to a doctrine in the process of coming into being, in continuous change and evolution. Even before the contemporary project of editing and curating his works that started in 1990 the period of time and the context in which the works were written represented a point of debate for the researchers and specialist concerned with the writings of Joachim of Fiore. In 1990 an international editorial board or committee for the edition

* Postdoctoral researcher at "Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania; email: florinahariga@gmail.com

** **Acknowledgement:** This work was supported by a grant of Ministry of Research and Innovation, CNCS - UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-PD-2016-0436, within PNCDI III.

of Joachim's works was formed in Berlin, two years after in 1992 the establishment of a broader "Comitato Scientifico" is responsible for the editions of the works of Joachim as one may discover from reading the 'Documenti,' Florensia 10 (1996), 215-24. Professor Gian Luca Potestà, from the beginning a member of the editorial board, published in 1995 the first volume of the collection: Joachim abbas Florensis, *Dialogi de prescientia Dei et de predestinatione electorum* (ed. Gian Luca Potestà [Centro Internazionale di Studi Giochamiti: Ioachim abbas Florensis. Opera omnia curantibus R.E. Lerner, A. Patschovsky, G.L. Potestà, R. Rusconi, K.-V. Selge, IV: Opera minora, 1] (Roma, 1995)). The latest volume dealing with editions of the works of Joachim of Fiore has reached the number 31 entitled *Expositio super Apocalypsim et opuscula adiacentia* by Alexander Patschovsky and Kurt-Victor Selge in course of publishing in 2020 at Harrassowitz Verlag in Wiesbaden and contains besides the notorious *Expositio super Apocalypsim* other works such as the *Expositio super Bilibris tritici etc. (Apoc. 6, 6)*, *De septem sigillis-Praefatio super Apocalypsim*, *Enchiridion super Apocalypsim* and the *Liber introductorius in Expositionem Apocalypsis*.

A good companion in understanding the eschatological view of Joachim of Fiore is the work of Gian Luca Potestà, *Il tempo dell'Apocalisse. Vita di Gioacchino da Fiore*, Gius. Laterza & Figli, Roma/Bari that appeared in 2004. For Joachim of Fiore the future of the Apocalypse was a real one, a future event in time that will most certainly come and bring with itself the ending of history, of the history of the world and of salvation in the same time, because the age of salvation represented by the second Person of the Trinity, the Son, will come to an end and be completed by the Second Advent of Christ. The aspects that Joachim had in mind are of practical nature and regard human behavior facing the ending of history and the preparation one should assume in this sense. The method of achieving a good eschatological education is by referring to models present in the Scripture and how did they acted towards the idea, the concept of end. The hermeneutical approach of the Scripture offers by means of allegories the possibility to create connections between the Old and the New Testament, to identify human examples and try to imitate their behavior in order to achieve salvation.

The scholars studying Joachim's works consider that he is a part of the tradition of apocalyptic thought, but in a moderate way as a *prudent apocalyptic* author as he was defined by Gian Luca Potestà. Joachim is, in this sense, an expert who explains the signs of time in the light of the Scripture, because in the Scripture he found the real revelation of the history of salvation, not only the things that happened, but also the ones that are yet to come (Potestà 2004, 4). In one of his later books, *Liber de Concordia Novi et Veteris Testamenti*, Joachim of Fiore approaches his method of exegesis by trying to put into accordance events and persons, human types from the

Old and the New Testament in order to create a common sense for perfection and salvation. This later named *concordia* method became an important instrument and hermeneutical principle for prophetic scriptural interpretation (Honée 2007, 51).

An interesting thing regarding the works of Joachim is the fact that he began writing his three major works *Psalterium*, *Concordia*, *Expositio* almost in the same time and work on them in parallel (Honée 2007, 53). In these sense it becomes difficult to trace and to date the ideas present in the works of the abbot in a chronological manner, asserting that some of his ideas belong to his later thought and some of them to the earlier one. The first place where the three status model regarding the history of salvation is present is the second book of the *Psalterium* considered as being finished around 1186-1187. Before this moment, in his other works, he mentions only the twofold model of understanding history (Honée 2007, 58). This second book of the *Psalterium* represents in fact the first work where Joachim unites the themes of the Trinity and of salvation by trying to explain how the three Persons manifest themselves in the history of humanity in order to ensure its perfection. Three *status* and two *tempora*, asserts Joachim, are the means by which God as Trinity manifests in the history of salvation: to the three *status* correspond also three orders of laymen, priests and monks that will have an important role in the two *tempora* of history. The Old Testament is linked to the Father, the New Testament to the Son and both of the *tempora* to the Holy Ghost accompanying in the first moment the Father and in the second one the Son (Potestà 2004, 105-127). The last revision made to his ideas was done in the same time or even prior to the *Expositio* regarding the theories and the traditional interpretation of the Apocalypse such as the reconciliation of Jews and Christians, the restoration of unity between the Christians of the Greek east and the Latin west, and the newer enriched spiritualization of monastic life. The third age is seen as a time of charisma and spirituality where the institutional and the rational of the church are hardly present as they were in the 13th century, it actually represents a radical critique of the church in the 13th century (McGinn 1971, 34).

Joachim of Fiore has influenced the perception and understanding of the eschatology of Christian origin of the 13th century, most of the texts in this direction have a source in an idea that may have derived from Joachim's writings and few are truly following the authentic writings and ideas of the Abbot. This represents the difference between *Joachite* and *Joachimist* sources and only rarely one may assert that an author is indeed referring to an authentic writing of Joachim of Fiore (McGinn 1971, 35). This differentiation and classification should also be taken into consideration in discussing the existence of the notorious lost treaty of the Abbot that has been condemned at the Lateran Council of 1215. The reception of Joachim's works

by the doctors of the Church such as Thomas Aquinas has been a modest one, the aspects regarding eschatology and the possible comparisons between the New and the Old Testaments have been considered too radical where they should have been understood in a more general manner, and the ideas approaching the future mendicant orders have been understood as mere plausible to materialize (Aquinas, *In IV Sent.*, d. 43, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3): “Et similiter videtur esse de dictis Abbatis Joachim, qui per tales conjecturas de futuris aliqua vera praedixit, et in aliquibus deceptus fuit”.

Thomas Aquinas also read and commented the decretal of the Lateran Council from 1215 and considered that Joachim's view on the doctrine of the Trinity errors in approaching and understanding Peter the Lombard (cf. McGinn 1971, 39). His error would reside in the fact that he did not reach for the works of Peter the Lombard following a scholastically-logical method in trying to understand them, but he tried to filter what he read by the means of his own allegorical and symbolical “lenses” (Aquinas 1864, 308): “Joachim autem Abbas Florentis monasterii non bene capiens verba Magistri praedicti, utpote in subtilibus fidei dogmatibus rudis, praedictam Magistri Petri doctrinam haereticam reputavit”.

In another passage of the *Prima Pars* of *Summa Theologiae* (q. 39, a. 5), Aquinas argues the hermeneutical method used by Joachim of Fiore in interpreting the texts of the *Sentences*, for the truth of the expression one has to take into consideration not only the thing that it is signified, but also the way of expressing that signification: “[...] circa hoc erravit Abbas Joachim, asserens quod, sicut dicitur, “Deus genuit Deum”, ita potest dici quod “essentia genuit essentiam [...]”. Sed in hoc deceptus fuit: quia ad veritatem locutionum, non solum oportet considerare res significatas, sed etiam modum significandi [...]”.

An interesting characteristic of Christian philosophy present in the writings of authors like Augustine and Aquinas is the attitude of interpreting eschatological signs as mechanisms that regulate the course of history rather than searching for clear signs present in the history of Christianity that may mark a real immediate world end as Joachim of Fiore does in trying to instantiate different signs in the course of historical ages (McGinn 1971, 39-40). Regarding the Franciscan side, Bonaventure mentions Joachim of Fiore in relation to the condemnation of the Fourth Lateran Council but he does not express a clear opinion about his eschatological hermeneutics for start. Bonaventure is more interested in his Commentary on the Book of Sentences to take the side of Master Peter the Lombard as it follows from his words (*In I Sent.*, dist. 5, dub. 4): “[...] ignoranter Joachim reprehendit Magistrum et quia, cum esset simplex, non est reveritus Magistrum, ideo iusto Dei iudicio damnatus fuit libellus eius in Lateranensi concilio et positio Magistri approbata.”

Joachim's treaty is again simply mentioned by Bonaventure as a *libellus* and not by a proper name that one may identify among the works of the abbot as present also in the article of the decree of the Council of 1215. This may point out that among the scholars of the time everyone knew the exact reference to the treaty, reference that has been further lost due to the fact that it has not been mentioned anymore in the writings that remain until present times. In approaching eschatological themes and the theology of history Bonaventure does not ever name Joachim of Fiore, but one may observe that the Joachite symbolic tradition has influenced his hermeneutical works such as *Collationes in Hexaemeron* based on the theme of the seven illuminations of the Divine intelligence. Bonaventure has manifested a preference of the numbers of seven and five in many of his works and classifications: seven steps are present in his *Itinerary of the mind into God* that one has to climb in order to be united with God and understand the spiritual work, seven is the number of the Sacraments on which he based one of his studies, but also of the number five that represent the faculties of the soul that define the human being (senses, imagination, reason, intellect, synderesis) – patterns of five and seven as they are to be found in the works of Joachim of Fiore as well. Another interesting similarity is the fact that Bonaventure is member of a debate of his time around the year 1270 when he opposes the use of Aristotelian philosophy as a tool for developing interpretations of Christian theology (McGinn 1971, 46). The situation reminds me of the Trinitarian debate when Joachim of Fiore opposes Peter the Lombard in defining the doctrine of the Trinity. The symbolical hermeneutical approach fights in both cases the dialectical one as also has happened before in the case of the debate between Roscelin of Compiègne and Peter Abelard. In this sense, the studies of Alessandro Ghisalberti, *L'ordine dell'aldilà nel pensiero di Gioacchino da Fiore*, 9° Congresso Internazionale di Studi Gioachimiti, 19-21 settembre 2019, San Giovanni in Fiore and of Constant J. Mews, "The Trinitarian Doctrine of Roscelin of Compiègne and Its Influence: Twelfth-century Nominalism and Theology Reconsidered" in *Languages et philosophie. Hommage à Jean Jolivet*, A. de Libera; A. Elamrani-Jamal; A. Galonnier; G. Dahan (ed), Paris, 1997, are most relevant for the topic. Another interpretation links Joachim and Peter Abelard on the grounds of hermeneutical and epistemological approaches. This is possible due to the interpretation of Abelard's thought as based upon a form of symbolical and figural intelligence of the revelation. Ester Brambilla Pisoni asserts that the dialectical approach of Abelard is not completely opposed to the figurative hermeneutics of Joachim inasmuch as also Abelard considers the world and man as *figures* of God. Abelard prefers a rational inquiry asserting that both human reason and language may not completely be able to define the divinity. The relevance of the study is that the author remarks connections between the Trinitarian approaches of the two thinkers by

associating the concept of *fear* to the Person of the Father and in viewing the *river* as original hypostasis of the Father in constituting the principle of the entire Trinity. In the concept of *figural intelligence* one may identify a common terrain of research oriented towards the same goal of both Abelard and Joachim of Fiore in what concerns epistemology and hermeneutics (Brambilla Pisoni 2010, 235-240).

The real consequences and the key of the condemnation of 1215 regarding Joachim's approach of the doctrine of the Trinity represented without doubts the affirmation of the thought of Peter the Lombard, aspect that marked his later powerful influence of the Christian theology of scholastic origin. The expression sustained by the Council and disapproved by Joachim of the *quaedam summa res* designates the concept of substance as being distinct from the three Persons of the Trinity. The substance or the essence is distinct from the three Persons or should not be understood in the same terms of those of person. The problem of defining the doctrine became soon a question of defining one's terms and language and, in this case, linguistics and logics had to serve now theological aspects. Constant J. Mews and Clare Monagle observe in their article "Peter Lombard, Joachim of Fiore and the Fourth Lateran Council" that Joachim's critique to Peter Lombard was partly inspired from the critique that Richard of Saint Victor earlier made to Peter referring to the error of separating the three Persons. The idea of the article is that the decision of the Fourth Lateran Council to render official the interpretation of Peter Lombard has been intimately attached to the desire of Pope Innocent III and the cardinals to strengthen the doctrinal fundamentals of the University of Paris and those of the exegesis made by the Parisian masters (Mews and Monagle 2010, 81-122).

In the end, it remains unclear what work and interpretation of Joachim of Fiore have been really condemned by the second article of the Lateran Council in 1215, scholars have different and divergent opinions on the matter saying that it could have been either a part of a treaty that has been preserved until the present times (*Psalterium decem chordarum*), or a completely different work (entitled as the decree of the Council expresses *De unitate seu essentia Trinitatis*) that has been lost or destroyed after the condemnation as Joachim himself expressed the will that all of his work should be verified and approved by the Holy Church. Eugène Honée (2010, 137-157) considers that the real critique to Peter Lombard was present in the lost treaty about the unity and essence of the Trinity, interpretation that differs from the one offered by Kurt-Victor Selge and Gian Luca Potestà who think the condemnation was oriented towards the first book of the *Psalterium* as the unique Trinitarian work written by the Abbot and preserved until present times. Although one may clearly observe mentions of Peter the Lombard (even though the mentioning was corrected after the Lateran Council in 1215 and replaced the name is still visible) in manuscripts of the *Tractatus in*

expositionem vite et regule beati Benedicti (for example, folio 145ra, cod. 322) present at the Biblioteca Antoniana in Padova as proof that Joachim personally criticized and attacked Peter the Lombard in other works as well different from the ones already mentioned above: “[...] abolita primo impietate Sabellii, qui personas negavit, secundo pravitate Arrii, qui unitatem scidit, tertio blasphemia Petri, qui unitatem a Trinitate dividens quaternitatem inducit.”

The interpretation of Eugène Honée is that the *Psalterium* is more a meditative work with a minor and implicit reference to Peter Lombard, distinctively of the other lost treaty that should have offered an explicit attack to the Master of the Sentences. The reference in the decree is clearly that of condemning an autonomous and independent treaty whose memory had to be considered as heretical and therefore lost. If the motives of the condemnation were merely political ones in order to serve the interests of the papacy regarding the authority of the University of Paris and the approaches of its masters or if Joachim’s interpretation to Peter Lombard has been indeed a case of misunderstanding of language and difference of thought may not be clearly revealed with scientific certainties in accordance to the remaining evidence that one may study and observe in the present times. Nevertheless, Joachim’s thought and symbolical hermeneutics applied in his works extend far more beyond the critique the Abbot made to the understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity remaining one of the greatest interpreters of the Apocalypse and eschatological signs and of the concordance between the two Testaments. Joachim of Fiore shaped the understanding of an era that finds echoes even in the present times each time one may try to find signs of the eschaton in the history of the world and seek concordances between the Scripture and one’s own life. More an exegete than a prophet, he gave to the posterity the model that may lead to perfection and salvation by the attention offered to the hermeneutics of the Scripture and the recurrent signs of God always present in the history of salvation.

References

- Alberigo, J.; Dossetti, J.; et al. (eds.). 1991. “Concilium lateranense IV-1215. Constitutiones, 2. De errore abbatis Joachim”. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*. Bologna.
- S. Bonaventurae opera omnia. 1891. vol. V. Ed. Colegii S. Bonaventura. Quaracchi. Florence.
- Brambilla Pisoni, Ester. 2009. “Le figure della Trinità in Pietro Abelardo”. In: *Pensare per figure. Diagrammi e simboli in Gioacchino da Fiore. Atti del VII Congresso internazionale di studi gioachimiti, San Giovanni in Fiore, 24-26 settembre 2009*. Alessandro Ghisalberti (ed.). Viella. Roma.
- Honée, Eugène. 2007. “Joachim of Fiore: The Development of his Life and the Genesis of his Works and Doctrines. About the Merits of Gian Luca Potestà’s New Biography”. *CHRC* 87, 1. Brill. Leiden.
- Honée, Eugène. 2010. “Symbolik und Kontext von Joachim von Fiore *antilombardischen Figuren*. Zur Interpretation von Tafel XXVI in der Faksimile-Ausgabe des *Liber*

- figurarum*". In: *Pensare per figure. Diagrammi e simboli in Gioacchino da Fiore. Atti del VII Congresso internazionale di studi gioachimiti, San Giovanni in Fiore, 24-26 settembre 2009*. Alessandro Ghisalberti (ed.). Viella. Roma.
- Joachim abbas Florensis. 1995. *Dialogi de prescientia Dei et de predestinatione electorum*. Centro Internazionale di Studi Giochamiti: Ioachim abbas Florensis. Opera omnia curantibus R.E. Lerner, A. Patschovsky, G.L. Potestà, R. Rusconi, K.-V. Selge, IV: Opera minora, 1. Roma.
- Joachim abbas Florensis. 2008. *Opera omnia*, curantibus R. E. Lerner, A. Patschovsky, G. L. Potestà, R. Rusconi, K.-V. Selge (Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo). Roma.
- McGinn, Bernard. 1971. "The Abbot and the Doctors: Scholastic Reactions to the Radical Eschatology of Joachim of Fiore". *Church History* 40: 30-47.
- Mews, C.J. 1997. "The Trinitarian Doctrine of Roscelin of Compiègne and Its Influence: Twelfth-century Nominalism and Theology Reconsidered". *Languages et philosophie. Hommage à Jean Jolivet*. A. de Libera; A. Elamrani-Jamal; A. Galonnier; G. Dahan (ed). Paris.
- Mews, Constant J. and Monagle, Clare. 2010. "Peter Lombard, Joachim of Fiore and the Fourth Lateran Council". *Medioevo. Rivista di storia della filosofia medievale*, XXXV. Il Poligrafo. Padova.
- Potestà, Gian Luca. 2004. *Il tempo dell'Apocalisse. Vita di Gioacchino da Fiore*, Gius. Laterza & Figli. Roma/Bari.