

Joachim and Joachimism in Italy

*And once more the understanding of Scripture, or revelation, or the key of David,
will be given to a person or multitude, and I think rather to a multitude.*

—St. Bonaventure, *Collationes* 16:29

In his sermons on the six days of creation, St. Bonaventure identified Francis as the founder of the order of contemplatives that will flourish at the end of time. This followed his identification of Francis in the *Legenda maior*, the official biography of the saint, as “the angel of the sixth seal” of Revelation. The above citation is suggestive of the important role given to both the founder and the Franciscan order itself in the events leading up to the end of days; events which, according to Bonaventure, had already been set in motion.

It is not really known how and when elements in the Franciscan order became aware of the teachings of the Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore and their ramifications for that order. The incredible success and growth of the Franciscans was seen as a mixed blessing by some in the order who felt that the teachings of their founder had been set aside in the pursuit of glory and power. The simplicity, humility, poverty, and devotion of St. Francis had been trampled over in the larger context of papal politics and the needs of an all-powerful Church. Yet, the encounter with Joachim and his writings suddenly gave new meaning to the events of the past years, and seemed to give a central role to the Franciscans in the years leading up to the end of time. St. Francis became a harbinger of the end of time, the angel of the sixth seal, and his order, or at least those of the order who followed his teachings, represented one of the two orders of “spiritual men” leading others into a new age. Though for reasons self-evident, these ideas were not expressly

set out in the writings of the Calabrian abbot, the central themes could be teased out of them, and they were given more impetus in works attributed to Joachim written in Italy in the coming decades.

Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135–1202) elaborated his conception of history as progressing toward salvation in a number of works written mainly in the last decade of the twelfth century.¹ In his thirties, he had made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and there, supposedly on Mount Tabor, had a vision, the first of three, that gave him a general understanding of the way he was to read the biblical text. However, it was with the gift of “spiritual intelligence,” granted him in the other two visions at the Cistercian monastery of Casamari in 1184, that he realized that he possessed the key to interpreting the biblical texts that revealed the patterns of history and its progression toward the end of times. Though already engaged with the idea of concordance between the Old and New Testament in a work written prior to the visions in Casamari, it was those visions that provided him with the mature understanding present in his central works: the *Liber concordia Novi ac Veteris Testamenti*, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, *Psalterium decem chordarum*, and the *Liber figurarum*.² Joachim developed patterns of twos and threes, the former based on the two Testaments, the latter on the three persons of the Trinity as they are understood to have been revealed in history.

Joachim's close reading of the Old Testament led him to see it as a key for understanding the events of the New Testament down to the current times. The methodology was one of concordance, which he explained as being a harmony that reflects similarity in character, but not in dignity between the two periods, meaning that the New Testament was more perfect than the Old. He envisioned the Testaments as two trees, the first growing from Adam and ending with the birth of Christ, the second starting from Uzziah, king of Judah and ending with Christ's second coming. According to Joachim's detailed calculations, each tree contained sixty-three generations divided into three groups of twenty-one, though the generations on each tree differed in duration, the first being carnal, the second more spiritual. The Old Testament tree was divided as follows: from Adam to Isaac, and then forty-two generations from

Jacob to the first coming of Christ. The New Testament tree, with its trunk starting from King Uziah, the king of Judah and contemporary of the prophet Isaiah who, according to Joachim, started preaching the Gospel, also had three groups, two of which, implying forty-two generations were to pass from the coming of Christ until the onslaught of the Antichrist. The length of a New Testament generation was thirty years, because this represented the age of Christ when he started to have disciples, his spiritual children, implying that the coming of the antichrist would be in 1260 (forty-two generations of thirty years' duration each). The twelve tribes and the twelve churches (seven in Asia and the five metropolitan churches of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem) are the branches of the trees emerging from Jacob and Christ respectively.³ In the same way that it was from the branch of the tribe of Judah that Christ emerged, so it will be from the branch of the Roman Church that the second coming will issue.⁴

But it was the book of *Revelation* that provided Joachim with the framework for understanding the internal structure of each of the trees, or the historical periods they represented. He understood the seven seals of the book (Revelation 5) to represent seven periods (*tempora*) of persecution of the Jews in the Old Testament, which, using the idea of concordance, implied that there would also be seven persecutions of the church. The Jews had been persecuted by the Egyptians, Canaanites, Syrians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Medes, and Greeks, and the Christians by the Jews, by the pagans, by the Persians, Goths, Vandals, and Lombards simultaneously, by the Saracans, and now in his own day, by the German emperors. That left two more persecutions, with the last, represented by Antiochus in the Old Testament, being the Antichrist. However, the last two persecutions (the sixth and seventh seals) would have to happen concurrently as the second coming was close at hand.

The Trinitarian pattern of three was probably the outcome of the second of his visions at Casamari in 1184, and resulted in a significant departure from previous understanding of the apocalypse. St. Augustine had proposed that the thousand-year reign of the saints with Christ was the present time of the Church, and that

therefore, all that was expected in the future was the second coming and final judgment.⁵ Joachim's understanding was, however, that the millennium was yet to come and was a third period that would be ushered in after the defeat of the Antichrist. Thus, Joachim outlined the history of the world as one divided into three statuses, each one connected to one of the three persons of the Trinity, and reflecting the relationship within the Trinity. Because there is progression in history toward salvation, the first status, that of the Father, is one in which "men lived according to the flesh," the second, that of the Son, "in which men live between two poles, that is between the flesh and the spirit," and the future third status, that of the Holy Spirit, "in which people live according to the spirit."⁶ Yet, the three statuses are interlinked in that the status of the Son, that of the current Church, has its roots in the status of the Father, with Aaron signifying priesthood and Isaiah evangelization. The third status has its roots in both the first and second status; Elijah or his disciple Elisha along with St. Benedict signifying the monastic spiritual way of life that will dominate in the third status.

Elijah is a pivotal figure in that he is the symbol of the Holy Spirit in both the first and third status. He is identified with fire in that he brought down the Divine fire on Mount Carmel when he confounded the prophets of Ba'al and he was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire. He announces the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father, and he will announce the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son as the second status comes to an end. He is linked with Moses in that they both spoke with Jesus when he transfigured on Mount Tabor (the very mountain upon which Joachim's first vision supposedly took place),⁷ and his connection with John the Baptist is also intimated in the Gospels in that the latter was the herald of Jesus' first coming.⁸ Elijah is the perfect figure to illustrate the double pattern of twos and threes, or the historical and spiritual progressions that are completely interlinked in Joachim's thought. The pattern of twos or the historical is more traditional in that it presents history progressing from the time of the Old Testament to the New Testament, which will last till the end of time in the second coming. The Trinitarian pattern is innovative

in that it places the third status within history, and posits a spiritual progression toward a more perfect state of being emerging from, but not replacing, the New Testament with its roots in the Old Testament as well.⁹ Elijah represents that spiritual progression within history as he has a crucial role in illuminating the revelation of the Trinity in history; the procession of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and Son, and the initiation of the third status, which will be the fruition of both the first and second status.

Central for Joachim's understanding of the unfolding of Divine revelation in history was the Tetragrammaton (IEUE).¹⁰ This is first worked out in Joachim's *Expositio in Apocalypsim* and also in the *Psalterium decem chordarum*, which was written as a result of the Easter vision in Casamari that clarified the meaning of the Trinity. In his reading of Revelation 1:8 in his commentary on the Apocalypse, Joachim shows how the Alpha and Omicron represent the Trinity and Unity. He does this using the Tetragrammaton which appears as a unity in the Omicron, and divided into IE at the apex of the Alpha, and EU and UE respectively at the bottom of the two uprights of the letter. For Joachim, this was proof that the Trinity had been revealed to the biblical Jews from within their most holy of Divine names.¹¹ Toward the end of the second book of the *Psalterium decem chordarum* Joachim writes: "Note the end of your questions [regarding the nature of the Trinity] in this holy name of God which is IEVE. IE is one name which refers to the Father, EV is one name which has reference to the Son, VE is one name which refers to the Holy Spirit. Indeed IEVE is one name, but it cannot simply be possible to refer to the Father alone or the Son alone or the Holy Spirit, but at the same time to all three. . . ." ¹² The figure of the Psaltry with ten strings from the Oxford manuscript of the *Liber figurarum* has the Tetragrammaton in the central *rosa* (which represents the Omicron) with the inscription around it *Deus omnipotens, Sancta Trinitas unus Deus*.¹³

This is shown in greater detail in the Trinitarian figure of the *Liber figurarum* where the three central interlocking circles indicate both the passage of time from the Creation to the end of the world and the working of the persons of the Trinity in the three statuses.¹⁴

The figures of the Alpha and the cursive Omega, on the upper and lower right of the central circles indicate the relationship between the three persons. In the Alpha, the Father (IE) sends forth both the Son (EU) and Holy Spirit (UE) and they are one as the IEUE in the middle indicates. In the cursive Omega which represents the mission of the Trinity in history, the Holy Spirit (E) proceeds from both the Father (I) and the Son (U). This double procession is indicated in history, as can be seen beneath the Omega. Moses inaugurates the first status; Elijah announces the roots of the second status within the first. John the Baptist inaugurates the second status with Elijah again coming as herald for the third status. The Alpha and Omega come together in the three interlocking circles in that they meet in the middle of the first circle with the IEUE in the small circle indicating the oneness, and then the emergence into history with the Father (IE) in the first circle, the Son (EU) in the second, and the Holy Spirit (UE) in the third. The first circle is the time of the Old Testament, the second and third the New Testament, though the third circle represents the spiritual fulfillment of both the Testaments. Here the connection between the name *Adonai* and the Tetragrammaton is also explicitly spelled out, in that in the epicenter of the three circles the two are mentioned together (*Adonai, IEUE, Tetragrammaton*).¹⁵

According to Joachim, he was living in the fortieth generation of the second status, that of the Son, the New Testament, and the Church, or in the immediate period before the opening of the sixth seal followed by the seventh in the forty-first and forty-second generations. These generations would be signified by the persecutions of the sixth and seventh heads of the great beast of Revelation 12, with the latter head being the Antichrist.¹⁶ These calculations pointed to the years 1200–1260 as the last two generations, though it was only in the *Liber figurarum* that he actually mentioned the year 1260.¹⁷ Joachim predicted that in these generations, there would also appear two orders of *viri spirituales* (spiritual men) who would mediate and guide others toward the new age, one of these more contemplative, the other more active. He also speculated that in the sixth *tempora* of the second status, a pope

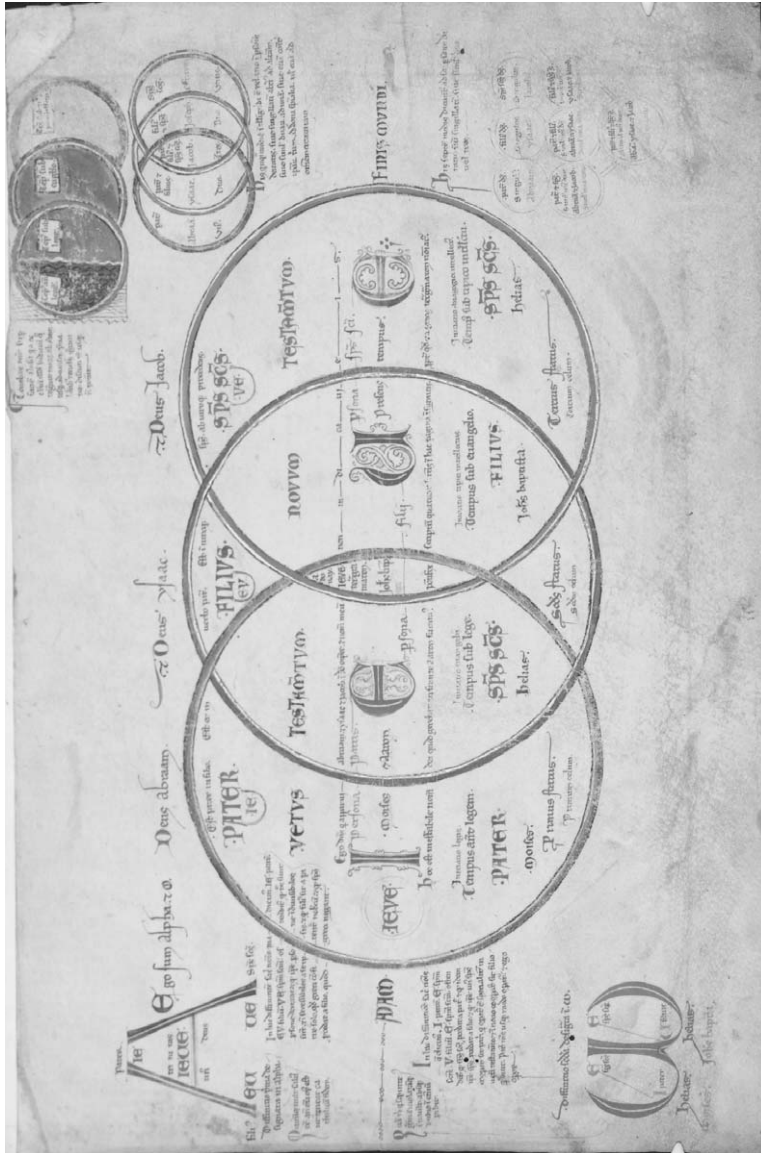


Figure 1.1 Trinitarian Figure with Tetragrammaton (IEVE). Taken from Joachim's *Liber figurarum*, Oxford, Corpus Christi College, Ms. 255A, f. 7v. By permission of the President and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

would come who would be sent from Babylon to Jerusalem to reform and renew the Church and who would face the Antichrist.¹⁸

Though it is immediately apparent that Joachim's works did not die with him, there was an interlude of some forty years before matters started to get out of hand. During this period, Joachim had taken a battering, in that the IV Lateran Council condemned his teachings on the Trinity while endorsing those of Peter Lombard.¹⁹ However, in contrast, Gregory IX, in his bull of July 13, 1234 canonizing St. Dominic, referred to the order Joachim had established as one of the pillars of the Church.²⁰ Additionally, there are a few citations of some of Joachim's works by theologians in Paris in the 1230s, but, in general, his impact seems to have been minimal. However, by the 1240s matters had changed considerably.

It is important to remember that Joachim lived and wrote in southern Italy and Sicily, and the available evidence, though not extensive, indicates that these places were important centers of Joachimism in the second half of the thirteenth century. The copies of Joachim's genuine works as well as the pseudo-Joachim biblical commentaries and various compilations of prophecies and collections of figures were all seemingly products of the South, whether they were carried out or redacted by Florentians, Cistercians, or Franciscans.²¹ One of these, the pseudo-Joachimite commentary on Jeremiah, may be based on an original work by Joachim, but was substantially redacted and adapted by either Florentians or Cistercians, and then Franciscans in Calabria.²² The work reflects disillusionment with elements within the Cistercian Order who had supported the condemnation of Joachim's treatise on the Trinity in 1215, but also emphasizes the important role of the order in the monastic society of the third status. The redaction of the original work, probably composed ca. 1244, is far more explicit than Joachim's real works in looking forward to 1260, identifying the forces of the Antichrist, and in giving a central role to the mendicant orders leading in to the third status. It also reflects the current political situation, in particular the ongoing controversy between emperor and papacy, with the former, the formidable Frederick II, being identified with the sixth or seventh head of the great beast of

Revelation.²³ The geographical sequences, which concentrate on the dioceses of Italy and Sicily in the *Pseudo-Isaiah* written between 1260–1266 by Franciscans, the identification of Frederick II as the seventh head of the beast in the *Praemissiones*, and the recalculation of the date of the start of the third status to 1290 in the latter and in a collection of Joachim's works and figures also point at southern Italy as being central to how Joachim's works were understood and applied.²⁴ One of the best witnesses to thirteenth-century Joachimism, Salimbene de Adam, a Franciscan chronicler of great import originally from Parma, also provides much substantiating evidence in that many of the Joachimites mentioned in his chronicle come from Sicily and southern Italy.

While it is unclear where and when the Franciscans became aware of Joachim's writings, and how they came to identify themselves as one of the two orders predicted by Joachim, and their founder as the angel of the sixth seal, by the 1240s these ideas were well established. In 1255 in a joint encyclical, Humbert de Romanis and John of Parma, generals of the Dominicans and Franciscans, viewed their orders as those sent to save the world, using Joachite imagery to substantiate this fact.²⁵ St. Bonaventure, in his *Legenda maiora*, which was adopted by the order in 1266 as the only official life of Francis, referred to the latter as having come in the spirit and power of Elijah and to being the sixth angel of the Apocalypse.²⁶ Much of the Franciscan interest in Joachim is doubtlessly due to the controversies that broke out immediately after Francis's death about the legitimacy and binding authority of his Last Testament and the issue of poverty and property. Those who tried to uphold the Last Testament and live to a severe standard of evangelical poverty set out by Francis found themselves increasingly on the defensive. They may have taken courage from Joachim's teachings which let them see Francis, as was Christ before him, as the initiator, and themselves as forerunners of the new age.

It is Frederick II's advance northward over the Alps in late 1239 that provides direct evidence of Franciscan interest in Joachim.²⁷ Salimbene de Adam reports that while he was in Pisa, a Florentian abbot, afraid that the emperor would ransack his monastery fled

there bringing with him all the works of Joachim that he had. This abbot was Salimbene's first teacher in Joachite matters and, as a result, Rudolph of Saxony, a Franciscan lector at Pisa, gave up his study of theology and became a great Joachimite.²⁸ Salimbene goes on to name many others in the order with whom he was in contact who adopted Joachim's teachings, among them, John of Parma who would become minister general of the order in 1247, Hugh of Digne, Bartholemew Guiscolus, and Gerard of Borgo San Donnino who would stir up a hornet's nest in Paris. The latter two probably became Joachimites in Sicily, and Bartholemew had been a guardian of the Franciscan convent in Capua.²⁹ Hugh of Digne was based at Hyères in Provence, and as Salimbene reports, was a great Joachimite and close colleague of John of Parma and a magnet for many others in the order interested in the Calabrian abbot's teachings. Thus, it is, from the late 1230s onward, most likely in Sicily, Calabria, and Naples where Joachim's teachings were well established, that they took root in the Franciscan order. Hence, Salimbene's chronicle, though mostly written with hindsight between 1283–1287, is crucial for showing the extent of the network of Franciscans who had adopted and adapted Joachite ideas.³⁰

Salimbene describes the traumatic events surrounding the publication in Paris of Gerard's *Introductorius in evangelium eternum* in 1254, which also has to be seen in light of the opposition to the mendicants from many elements in the Church. Monks should be in monasteries, and not wandering around parishes preaching and undermining the role of the local priests and clerics. The presence of the mendicants in the universities was also a source of great controversy as they competed with the secular canons for the chairs of theology. Their supposed adherence to absolute poverty also made them targets for those who saw them as a dangerous innovation in the Church. Developments and disagreements within the order regarding issues as central as the interpretation of the extent of poverty, particularly in relation to the use of property, strict observance of the rule and the legal standing of the Last Testament, the importance of learning, and the whole question of

Francis's intentions were also putting considerable strain on the order.³¹ Facing this external and internal opposition, there was comfort to be found for those in the Franciscan order who adopted Joachim's teachings, because he seemed to have predicted the arrival at the end of the second status of two monastic orders who would roam the world spreading light rather than being cloistered.

Clearly, Gerard of Borgo San Donnino wrote with the fast-approaching date of 1260 in mind, and his understanding of Joachim's teachings led him to believe that if each previous status had its own gospel, then it stood to reason that in the progression toward the age of the Holy Spirit, a new gospel would be revealed.³² According to the commission that examined Gerard's work, it included some of Joachim's major works with an introduction that suggested, among other things, that the New Testament would be superseded in the same way the Old was, and that the *Eternal Gospel* was identical with Joachim's teachings.

The publication of the *Eternal Gospel*, which would have been considered in bad taste at any time, was only grist for the mill to those seeking to challenge and discredit the Franciscans in the highest circles. Gerard was an anomaly, who was rapidly dispatched back to Capua in 1256, and his claims were not widely accepted, but this scandal drew the attention of many to the influence of Joachim and writings attributed to him on the order.³³ William of St. Amour, the chief advocate of the seculars against the encroachment of the mendicants at the university in Paris reported that Joachim's teachings had powerful admirers in Rome, and not only among the Franciscans.³⁴ This claim is substantiated by Salimbene who mentions that the Roman senator in 1257–1258, Lord Brancalione of Bologna, had a copy of Gerard's book, and clearly other copies were making the circuit.³⁵ Angelo of Clarenò, one of the leaders of the spirituals in the fourteenth century, implies that there were many who were attracted to the teachings of Joachim, and although the important landmark of 1260 passed without anything happening, disillusionment did not imply abandonment of Joachimite teachings. After 1260, there appeared in southern Italy Joachimite recalculations of the forty-two generations that began at the start of

Christ's ministry rather than from the nativity. That implied that the new age would start in 1290.³⁶

Salimbene provides interesting instances of reinterpretation of Joachim's teachings, and shows how widespread these ideas were in certain circles. Though Salimbene writes that Joachim never set out a date for the coming of the Antichrist and the end of history, the commentary on Jeremiah talks specifically about 1260, and in 1248 or thereabouts, Salimbene seems to accept this relying on his study of the text with two other Joachimite brothers, one from Capua and the other from Sicily.³⁷ However, the chronicle seems to indicate that at a certain moment Salimbene became a little more circumspect about Joachimism. This is based on a passage wherein a Brother Bartholomew of Mantua who had been a minister in Rome and Milan took Salimbene to task for having adhered to the teachings of Joachim, and the latter comments that since the death of Frederick II (the recorded discussion between Hugh of Digne and the Dominican Peter must have taken place before this as it is one of the central issues in their disputation over matters Joachite) in 1250 and the passing of 1260 he had laid these teachings aside and, "now I plan to believe in nothing save what I can see."³⁸ However, this remark was made in the aftermath of the controversy surrounding John of Parma who had been forced to resign, to a senior member of the order who was clearly not enamored either by John or by his Joachite leanings. Salimbene's remark clearly has to be seen as politically expedient at that moment in time, and should not be taken too seriously.³⁹ The chronicle, written in the 1280s is suffused with Joachimite ideas and indeed, after this discussion with Bartholomew, Salimbene is full of praises for Joachim and his writings, and his understanding of the place of the Franciscans in the coming dispensation remains unchanged. Indeed, when writing about 1260, Salimbene sees in the flagellant movement the start of the fulfilment of the Joachite prophecy, and for instance, in 1284, Salimbene mentions studying a commentary on the Apocalypse by a Brother Bertold of Germany adding, "And I did this in order to know the meanings of those angels, but I was not interested in the rest because I had the exposition of Joachim which I

consider to be the best of all the others.”⁴⁰ Salimbene again cites the pseudo-Jeremiah commentary in 1287, where Joachim supposedly gives the Franciscans a prominent role in the times leading toward the third status.⁴¹

Following 1260, and notwithstanding the appearance of the flagellants, Salimbene seems to have been aware of the attempt to recalculate and date the start of the third status to 1290. Though he never mentions this specific year, Salimbene seems to be prepared to accept that the generation between 1260 and 1290 is the crucial one in the buildup to Joachim’s third status. Referring to the year 1278, while discussing why the Holy Sepulchre had not been recaptured from the Muslims even though numerous crusades had been planned, Salimbene cites from Luke 21:24 (“And Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the gentiles, till the times of the nations be fulfilled”) and Revelation 11:2 (“But the court, which is without the temple, cast out, and measure it not: because it is given unto the gentiles, and they shall tread the holy city under foot forty-two months”). Basing himself on the pseudo-Jeremiah commentary, Salimbene explains that the forty-two months represent the forty-two generations from Christ to the year 1260, when the flagellants appeared on the scene. Yet he adds, that each generation is of thirty years duration because Jesus was baptized by John at that age. Salimbene cites Revelation 11:3 (“I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days clothed in sackcloth”) to indicate the significance of that number and shows that days should be read as years. In his genuine works, Joachim refers to the length of the New Testament generations as being thirty years so there is nothing new here. However, Salimbene’s comment is in line with other post-1260 southern Italian traditions which calculate the generations starting from the passion (or baptism), rather than the nativity and hence, arrive at a date of 1290 for the start of the third status.⁴² Salimbene states that it is Divine will that the Holy Sepulchre has not been recaptured and that there has not been any emperor after Frederick II.⁴³ Yet, the juxtaposition of this discussion with the Joachite calculation of the forty-two generations seemingly implies

that events that started in 1260 will come to a conclusion in the following generation. This reading is supported by Salimbene's reference to the Council of Lyon in 1274 where the Greeks supposedly returned to the fold, and the following paragraphs deal with the upcoming conversion of the Jews and Gentiles based on Joachim's understanding of these events.⁴⁴

According to Joachim's view of salvation, there is a progression from original sin, throughout history toward the third status, and this also points toward a return to the pristine spiritual state before the Fall. In other words, over time, there is a movement away from carnality and worldly affairs toward spiritual life and true knowledge of God. Joachim believed that if the first status was that of the Old Testament and the second of the New Testament, the third, which is intertwined with the two preceding ones, will be a true and spiritual understanding of both Testaments. Spiritual intelligence is also refined as the third status approaches and will produce spiritual men who will live in this true knowledge. In a fascinating reading of the biblical story of Jacob, this also implied a union of Christians and Jews in the third status. Jacob's leaving of the Land of Israel signifies his move from the first to the second status where he becomes blessed with children and wealth. His conflict with Laban and his sons who were jealous of Jacob's success represents the conflict between the contemplatives of the Church and the clergy. Jacob's return to the land of his forefathers signifies the return to the Jews. Citing Paul: "When the fullness of the gentiles comes in, so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:25-26), Joachim understood this to mean that when the perfected Christians returned to the Land, they and the Jews would be as one: "indeed, when Jacob completes his itinerary, he comes to his father, for at the end of the sixth time of the sixth age . . . there is a union of the gentile and the Hebrew people, and there will be one fold and one shepherd."⁴⁵ In contradistinction to his predecessors and contemporaries for whom the conversion of the Jews was a central element of the end of days, Joachim envisioned a union of Shem and Yefet, of Jew and Christian in the third status in knowledge of God and in a spiritual state.⁴⁶

The time of the return of the Jews to the fold and the union of the two nations was to occur at the end of the second status as the spiritual perfection of Christianity was to become apparent. Robert Lerner's study has shown that Joachim's teachings about the Jews resonated among the Franciscans who adopted his teachings. The redactors of the Jeremiah and Isaiah commentaries were aware of this concept and other central figures such as Hugh of Digne, though not mentioning it expressly, seem to have accepted it.⁴⁷ Hugh asked Salimbene to make a copy of Joachim's *Treatise on the Four Gospels* for John of Parma and in that work Joachim's hopes for the imminent return of the Jews are most prominent.⁴⁸ Interestingly, Salimbene himself comments with respect to the conversion of the Jews: "See Joachim's book, for it is a most beautiful and delightful commentary filled with truth," seemingly referring to the aforementioned treatise.⁴⁹ In addition, Gerard of Borgo San Donnino also seems to have included some of these ideas in his introduction to the *Eternal Gospel* or in his glosses to the text of Joachim's *Liber concordia*. Salimbene's chronicle shows the intimate connections between Joachimites in the Franciscan Order, the discussions that were held and the books that were copied and studied. Thus, this notion of a spiritual union between Christian's and Jews seems to have had a large number of adherents in southern Italy and probably Sicily as well.⁵⁰

The establishment of the monastery of Fiore in the Sila Mountains in Calabria by Joachim also takes on apocalyptic tones. In a biography written by a Florentine almost immediately after Joachim's death, Fiore is described as the new Nazareth, from where the seed of the new Israel will spread forth.⁵¹ Joachim saw his monastery as the locus of the new flowering of the spirit and it is for this reason that he named it Fiore, Flor, Flower, believing it to be the meaning of the Hebrew word *Nazeret* (Nazareth) as well.⁵² The biography also depicts Joachim as a prophet of the exile and the restorer of Israel, using imagery found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, ideas found in Joachim's own works as well. Joachim suggests that the third temple and city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt by the modern exiles in the same manner that the second temple was built by

the sons of the exiles from Judah. Yet, according to the biography and other pseudo-Joachimite texts, Joachim does not seem to be referring to the earthly Jerusalem and temple, but to Fiore, and southern Italy as the place where the new Jerusalem will flourish.⁵³ Joachim, the prophet of exile and redemption, predicts the fall of the earthly Jerusalem to the Muslims and sows the seed of redemption in the spiritual Holy Land to be found in southern Italy.⁵⁴

Toward the end of the fourth book of the *Liber concordia*, Joachim talks about the new leader from Babylon, a universal pontifex of the New Jerusalem, who would arise in the forty-second generation and renew the teachings of the Christian faith and would preach the word of God.⁵⁵ For the Franciscans, the generation after 1260 was the forty-second generation and it seems clear that they were expecting this new leader to appear. Interestingly, in a conversation with the Cistercian abbot Adam of Persigny, in 1198, Joachim talked about the appearance of the Antichrist in Rome, which for him was the mystical Babylon. Joachim then went on to predict that Pope Innocent III would not have a successor, and that he himself might live to see the Antichrist. Thus, the idea was mooted that the Antichrist would appear in Rome and that there would be no successor to the pope, though eventually a new leader would arrive to lead the Church into the third status.⁵⁶ As shall be shown, Abulafia's appearance in Rome, his reference to himself as the Antichrist, and his message about the end of Christianity may have resonated in certain circles with teachings associated directly with Joachim regarding the tribulations of the church leading up to the third status.

As the following chapters will indicate, Abulafia clearly latched on to these teachings, and adopted and adapted them to reflect his worldview and understanding of the unfolding of events leading up to the end of times. It is most likely these Franciscans, whom he encountered during his perambulations around Sicily and southern Italy, who provided him with insights with which to interpret his own visions. Yet there are also grounds to consider the possibility that the Franciscan Joachimites might have found interest in Abulafia and they might have been prepared to entertain his ideas. This

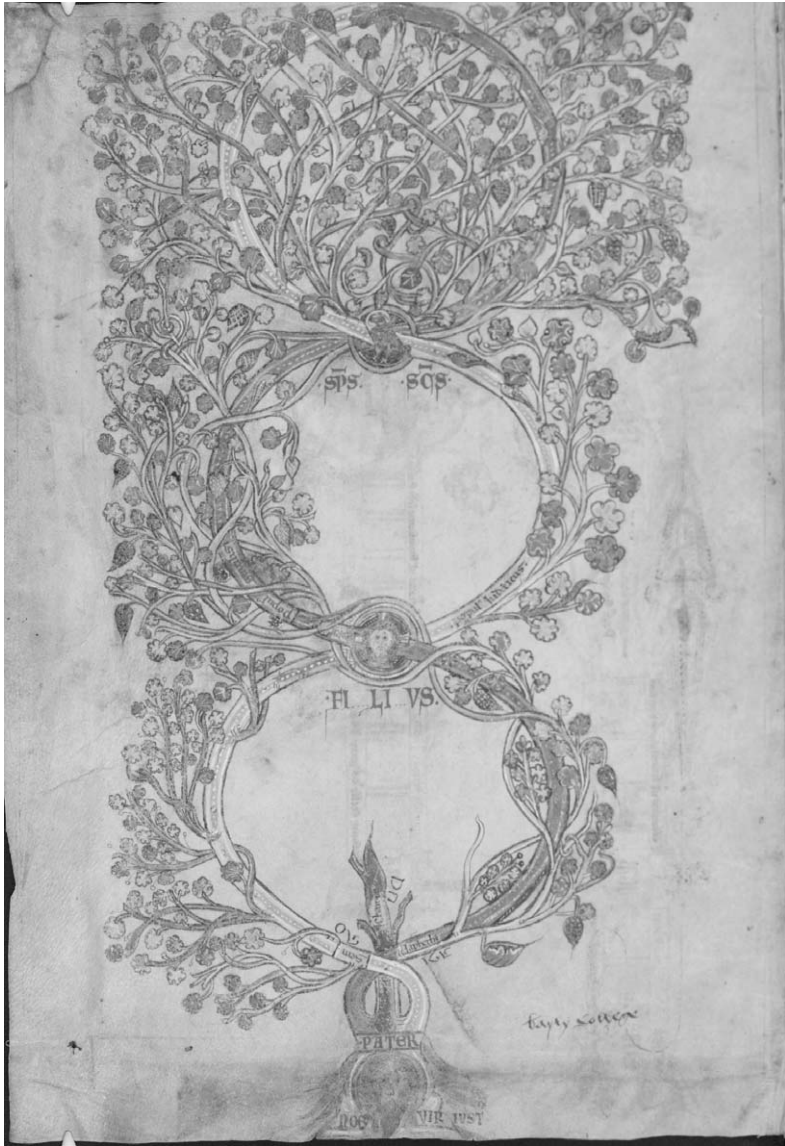


Figure 1.2 The Trinitarian Tree Circles. The Jews and Gentiles merge in full bloom in the third status. Taken from Joachim's *Liber figurarum*, Oxford, Corpus Christi College, Ms. 255A. f. 12v. By permission of the President and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

is not to say that they accepted his interpretations and understanding of the biblical text, his messianic claims, or his predictions regarding upcoming events. More likely, they would have read him into the Joachimite texts that predicted the events leading up and into the third status.

In the *Praemissiones*, which presents adaptations and, sometimes, misrepresentations of Joachim's figures and is associated with the pseudo-Isaiah commentary, the figure of the seven seals indicates that the last tribulations or opening of the sixth and seventh seals would take place in *Soldanorum provincia* and *Italia*.⁵⁷ This also supports other indications in the revised figures, such as the seventh head of the dragon that connects the Hohenstaufen with Antichrist. Thus, Italy was to be the place where the final crises before the third status would begin. Joachim's portrayal of southern Italy as a place of spiritual renewal would also find resonance with Abulafia, who saw Sicily as the place of the renewal of prophecy and messianic revelation. There was also the idea that disaster was about to strike the papacy in the lead up to the transition to the third status, and Abulafia's mission to the pope might have been seen in that light.⁵⁸ In addition, Abulafia was preaching knowledge of the Tetragrammaton as the true essence of God, which for the Joachimites was the most sublime representation of the oneness and Trinitarian nature of God. As Salimbene indicates, the *Liber figurarum* was read frequently and one of the central figures, the three intertwined circles along with the Alpha, cursive Omega, and Omicron, is clear indication of the centrality of the Tetragrammaton.⁵⁹ Abulafia's calculation of 1290 as the year of redemption would also have struck chords with Joachimites in general as can be seen from the commentary on Isaiah and the collection of works found in the late-thirteenth-century manuscripts that recalculate the generations to 1290. And Abulafia's vision of history following the redemption in 1290, while not entirely palatable to the Joachimites in that, naturally, neither Christ nor Christianity play any part, would nevertheless have been of interest in that it portrayed a progression to a spiritual level of being, knowledge, and belief.