Late Medieval Mediterranean Apocalypticism: Joachimist Ideas in Ramon Llull's Crusade Treatises

Michael Sanders
Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/hilltopreview

Part of the Catholic Studies Commons, Christianity Commons, European History Commons, History of Christianity Commons, History of Religion Commons, Intellectual History Commons, Medieval History Commons, Medieval Studies Commons, and the Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/hilltopreview/vol7/iss2/5

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Hilltop Review by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
Late Medieval Mediterranean Apocalypticism: Joachimist Ideas in Ramon Llull’s Crusade Treatises

Cover Page Footnote
The author would like to thank Dr. Larry Simon for his comments on this article and his invaluable guidance over the years.

This article is available in The Hilltop Review: http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/hilltopreview/vol7/iss2/5
Late Medieval Mediterranean Apocalypticism: Joachimist Ideas in Ramon Llull’s Crusade Treatises

Co-Winner, Third Place Paper, Spring 2015

By Michael Sanders
Department of History
michael.j.sanders@wmich.edu

A volume centered on the theme “Changes in Culture and Technology” should contain an essay dedicated to the thirteenth century. James Joseph Walsh famously called the thirteenth the “greatest of centuries.” So many groups, institutions, and ideas developed during this time and profoundly changed the medieval world. The Franciscans, Dominicans, and other mendicants replaced the Benedictines, Cistercians, and other monks as the dominant religious orders. Monastic and cathedral schools gave way to universities as the preeminent institutions of learning. Modern states began taking shape, and national identities began their slow emergence. These thirteenth-century developments remain with us today and continue to shape the modern world.

Great adversities accompanied these changes. A disagreement over the meaning of the vow of poverty split the Franciscan Order into two parties, the Spirituals and Conventuals, shortly after the group’s founding. The Spiritual Franciscans were a minority of the Franciscan Order. Spiritual groups first appeared in Italy, then Provence (southern France), the Crown of Aragon, and Sicily. These groups believed the Franciscan vow of poverty meant having a poor possession (usus pauper) of goods. The majority of Franciscans, who became known as the Conventual Party, maintained that the Order fulfilled its vow of poverty by granting ownership of all its possessions to the papacy. Franciscans could use grand churches and other costly goods as long as they did not own them. The Spirituals contended, however, that the vow of poverty included not only the renunciation of ownership but also the renunciation of all goods, except the barest necessities. The Spirituals and Conventuals feuded throughout the latter half of the thirteenth century and into the fourteenth until the dissolution of the former group in 1317.

Violent struggles also occurred as modern states began forming in the thirteenth century. Present-day Spain began taking shape as the Christian kingdoms of the northern Iberian Peninsula, namely Portugal, Castile, and the Crown of Aragon, expanded southward into Muslim Spain (al-Andalus). Led by the royal dynasty known as the House of Barcelona, the Crown of Aragon in eastern Spain also expanded across the Mediterranean Sea into Sicily. Sicily had been ruled by Charles I from the House of Anjou, a French dynasty of counts who became kings of southern Italy in the mid-thirteenth century. The conquest of Sicily by the Crown of Aragon ignited a war between the Houses of Barcelona and Anjou known as the War of the Sicilian Vespers. This bloody conflict lasted twenty years (1282-1302) and heavily influenced southern European politics and religion.

Such violent and numerous changes often create a sense of impending doom. Society seems to enter a state of chaos as the status quo changes. Many people have tried to make sense of chaotic times through apocalypticism, beliefs about the world’s rapidly approaching end. Apocalyptic texts place chaotic times near the end of the world in broad, often divinely conceived, paradigms of history. Fitting into overarching models of history gives moments of discord a sense of meaning, significance, and order. In the thirteenth century many southern Europeans turned to the historical paradigms of Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135-1202). Originally a junior chancery official like his father, Joachim decided to enter the religious life after a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (modern-day Israel and Palestine) in 1167. He lived first as a
hermit, then a priest, and finally, around 1171, a monk at the monastery of Corazzo in southern Italy. Joachim quickly became abbot of Corazzo and eventually founded his own monastery called San Giovanni in nearby Fiore. After Joachim’s writings made him famous throughout southern Europe. These writings include eighteen treatises, two poems, and a few letters and sermons. Most of these texts describe Joachim’s two historical paradigms that predict the world’s end in the thirteenth century. After Joachim’s death few people became Joachites—strict followers of the abbot’s paradigms. Yet the writings of numerous thirteenth-century thinkers, especially among the Spiritual Franciscans, do show signs of Joachimist influence. They reflect several themes in the abbot’s thought, such as impending tribulation, new religious orders, and the end of history.

Antonio Oliver and Martin Aurell have suggested a Joachimist influence in the works of one of thirteenth-century Spain’s most famous authors, Ramon Llull. Born around 1232, Llull lived the life of a licentious troubadour in the Kingdom of Majorca, the part of the Crown of Aragon consisting of the Balearic Islands (Majorca, Minorca, Ibiza, and Formentera) and small regions (Roussillon and Perpignan) in southeastern France. In his early thirties Llull began having visions of Christ on the Cross. He abandoned his troubadour lifestyle and devoted his life to spreading Catholic Christianity among Muslims, Jews, Greek Orthodox Christians, and other peoples outside the Catholic Church. Llull decided converting non-Catholics was the “service . . . most pleasing to God,” because he believed humanity could only achieve its end or purpose through Catholic Christianity. Like many Catholic thinkers in the high medieval period (1000-1300), Llull maintained humans were “created so that God be loved, known, honoured, served and feared by man.” Humanity’s purpose, or what Llull usually calls humanity’s first intention (intentio prima), is thus to worship and understand God. In Llull’s view, Catholic Christianity offers the only way to achieve this first intention because only its doctrines, like the Trinity and Incarnation, explain divine nature. Llull argued other Christian and non-Christian faiths do not lead humanity to its purpose, so he endeavored to bring everyone into the Catholic fold.

Llull wrote 265 works containing numerous strategies for spreading Catholicism. Together these strategies form a conversion program organized around three broad themes—mission, philosophy, and crusade. Many strategies describe how to prepare missionaries to proclaim the Gospel in non-Christian lands. Even more strategies explain how the truth of Christian doctrine can be proven through Llull’s original Neoplatonic philosophy known as the Art (Ars). Several strategies concern ways to execute successful crusades. Llull wrote some of the best summaries of his conversion program in his Tractatus de modo convertendi infideles (1292), Liber de fine (1305), and Liber de acquisitione Terrae Sanctae (1309). Yet modern scholarship has paid most attention to the crusading aspects of these treatises. Llull admittedly wrote the texts for audiences, described further below, who were organizing crusades, and these treatises do contain Llull’s most in-depth comments on crusading. Llull, however, used these works, especially his most extensive treatise De fine, as an opportunity to promote all aspects of his conversion program. Each treatise contains sections describing Lull’s missionary proposals and Art. Llull wrote these texts to garner support for not only his crusade proposals but also his entire conversion program.

Llull’s conversion program indeed needed support. Its author had failed to gain much attention for his program outside the Kingdom of Majorca until the last two decades of his life. In the Middle Ages and today, many of Llull’s ideas seem “extravagant and extreme,” contradictory, and downright confusing. Llull has consequently gained a reputation as a utopian “in the sense that his life and works represent an escape from reality.” More and more studies, though, are beginning to show Llull had an acute awareness of the political, intellectual, and religious circumstances of his times. Vicente Servera, for instance, has noted that Llull used utopian images as rhetorical devices. He portrayed exaggerated or idealized figures to show what the world should be like. Llull’s utopianism, according to
Servera, makes his writings an “art of seduction.” Llull carefully chose his words so that his texts “might appear like a military tactician’s address.” His rhetoric motivates his intended audience to take specific actions by paying close attention to their likes and dislikes. Like Servera’s essay, this article further challenges the image of Llull as a utopian and tries to understand better the author’s rhetorical skill. It demonstrates Llull’s firm connection to his time by analyzing one of the most overlooked themes of De fine—apocalypticism. This article concludes Llull utilized Joachimist words and themes, for which his Mediterranean readers had a liking, as persuasive devices to promote his conversion program. It comes to this conclusion first by examining Joachim of Fiore’s ideas that shaped thirteenth-century apocalypticism. The article then identifies what political circumstances and individuals spread Joachimist ideas throughout the late medieval Mediterranean world. A review of the apocalyptic passages in Llull’s treatise follows, and finally Llull and Joachim’s apocalyptic beliefs are compared.

The apocalyptic ideas that Llull encountered in the late medieval Mediterranean world came from Joachim of Fiore’s historical paradigms. Joachim developed his paradigms from biblical exegesis. Apocalypticism usually results from scriptural interpretation, but Joachim read the Bible in a new way. He invented a new theory of exegesis called concordia (harmony), which he defined as:

a similarity, equality, and proportion of the New and Old Testaments. I call it an equality of number but not of dignity, when, by means of some likeness, one person and another person, one order and another order, one war and another war, seem to gaze into each other’s faces. Abraham and Zachary, Sara and Elisabeth, Isaac and John the Baptist, Jacob and the man Christ Jesus, the twelve patriarchs and the same number of apostles, as well as all other similar cases . . .

In other words, concordia is the recognition of repeating patterns in the Bible and history. Through concordia, for instance, Joachim equates Jacob and Jesus Christ. The former founded Judaism, while the latter founded Christianity. The two figures have many different characteristics. Joachim attributes to Christ a much higher “dignity,” or level of spiritual understanding, than Jacob. Yet they both have the same function in their respective ages as founders of new religions. Concordia is similar to allegorical exegesis, but Joachim carefully distinguishes concordia “as parallels between the two Testaments, not as allegorical interpretations.”

Marjorie Reeves, in contrast, views Joachim’s two historical paradigms (diffinitiones) as his most original conceptions. Joachim’s first paradigm divides history into three ages (status):

Because there are three coeternal and coequal trinitarian persons, when we take into account that which exemplifies the likeness of these persons the first status is reckoned from Adam to Christ, the second from King Josiah to the present time, the third from Saint Benedict to the consummation of the age. When, however, we omit the initial tempora and concentrate on that phase which is crucial to each status, then the first status is reckoned from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, up to Zachary, the father of John, or even to John himself and to Christ Jesus. The second is reckoned from
Each age belongs to a member of the divine Trinity. The first is the Age of the Father. The second is primarily the Son’s but secondarily the Holy Spirit’s. The third is the Age of the Holy Spirit alone. Like a tree, each age has three phases—one when it grows, the most important one when it matures (clarificatio) and bears fruit (fructificatio), and a final one when it declines and decays. These ages overlap when all of their phases are taken into account. The first age, for example, ends with Christ (c. 7 BC–c. 33 AD), but the second begins beforehand with King Josiah (c. 648 BC–c. 609 BC). The status, however, follow one another when only their middle and most significant phases are considered. The first age matures from the time of the Jewish patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to that of the Jewish priest and prophet Zachary, his son John the Baptist, or Jesus Christ. The second bears fruit afterward until Joachim’s time. The abbot of Fiore thus lived at the end of the second age’s maturation, and he predicted the flowering of the Holy Spirit’s Age would occur shortly afterward between 1200 and 1260. Joachim regarded this time as the most important part of his historical paradigm. He believed the third age would prepare humanity for eternity with God after history had ended on earth.

Joachim’s second historical paradigm explains how the Age of the Holy Spirit would bring about the end of history and prepare humanity for the rest of eternity. This paradigm consists of two eras (tempora). The first era corresponds to the Old Testament and Jews, the second to the New Testament and Christians. The first era lasts from Adam to Christ, the second from Christ to the world’s end. Each era includes seven periods defined by seven major wars or persecutions, and ends with a restful Sabbath period meant to spiritually prepare humanity for eternity with God. The Egyptians, Midianites, various unspecified nations, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Medes and Persians, and finally the Greeks persecuted the Jews during the first era. The persecutions of the Christians during the second era came from six kings—Herod, Nero, Constantius, Muhammad, Mesemoth, and Saladin—and their three peoples—the Jews, Pagans, and Muslims. Herod leads the Jews, Nero and Constantius the pagans, and Muhammad, Mesemoth, and Saladin the Muslims. Joachim predicted the final persecution of the second era would happen under two Antichrists and their unknown followers during the thirteenth century. The abbot consequently became known as the “Prophet of Antichrist.”

Out of these persecutions, Joachim envisioned two religious orders emerging. One group would consist of monks; the other would contain hermits. Joachim referred to these orders collectively as the spiritual men (viri spiritualis). These orders would develop under the persecutions of the second era, which would teach the spiritual men the “eternal gospel (doctrina spiritalis).” This gospel refers to the spiritual knowledge necessary to bring about the “fullness (plenitudo)” or completion of history. Joachim, like many Christian thinkers, believed history would be completed after “the Jews and many pagan races [are] converted to the Lord.” Here the term “pagan” signifies anyone adhering to a religion outside of Christianity. Joachim also thought the end of history would not occur until the Greek Orthodox Church and heretical Christian sects reunited with the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church, in other words, truly had to be universal before eternity with God, the time after history, could begin. The preaching of the spiritual men, endowed with the eternal gospel, would lead all non-Catholics into the Roman Church, according to Joachim’s second paradigm.

The spiritual men would also lead the Church itself. The end of history could not occur, according to Joachim, until the Catholic Church was reformed. The abbot wanted to further the Gregorian Reforms, attempts by the papacy to stop clerical abuses, and free the Church from the control of secular rulers. He additionally recognized monasticism needed reform as
well. Monastic orders like the Cistercians were criticized for their wealth and avarice, and general enthusiasm for the monk’s way of life began to decline in the late twelfth century. Joachim believed the leadership of the coming spiritual men would reinvigorate both monasticism and the overall Church. Purified by the struggles of the second era, the spiritual men would in turn purify the world by spreading what they had learned from their suffering.

Joachim predicted the spiritual men would appear during the sixth period of persecution in his second paradigm, the same time as the transition between the second and third status of his first paradigm. Joachim claims “the order of the married . . . seems to pertain to the Father . . . the order of preachers in the second time to the Son, and so the order of monks to whom the last great times are given pertains to the Holy Spirit.” The spiritual men, in other words, would dominate during the third status (the age of the Holy Spirit) just as prelates dominated the second status (the age of the Son) and laymen the first status (the age of the Father). Further analysis of Joachim’s paradigms is unnecessary for the purposes of this article. The main themes of Joachim’s apocalypticism have been reviewed. These ideas—the abbot’s theory of concordia, patterns of history based on the Divine Trinity, eras of persecutions, spiritual men, and sense of history’s imminent end—influenced apocalypticism from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries.

Joachim’s ideas became so influential due to several personalities and politico-military circumstances in Mediterranean Europe. Ramon Llull, as we shall see, had connections to many of the events and people that spread Joachimist influences in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The first factor for the rise of Joachimist influence was the crusades. Apocalypticism has been a part of crusade literature since Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont (1095). Guibert, the French abbot of Nogent-sous-Coucy, recorded Urban’s apocalypticism in his Deeds of God through the Franks:

Thus through you the name of Catholicism will be propagated, and it will defeat the perfidy of the Antichrist. . . . These times, dearest brothers, perhaps will now be fulfilled, when, with the aid of God, the power of the pagans will be pushed back by you . . . with the end of the world already near. . . . Nevertheless, first, according to the prophecies, it is necessary, before the coming of the Antichrist in those parts, either through you or through whomever God wills, that the empire of Christianity be renewed, so that the leader of all evil, who will have his throne there, may find some nourishment of faith against which he may fight. Consider, then, that Almighty providence may have destined you for the task of rescuing Jerusalem from such abasement.

Like Joachim, Urban believed the end of the world was near. The pope, according to Guibert, envisioned Antichrist arising in the eastern Mediterranean world to persecute Christians. Urban wanted crusaders to retake the Holy Land, among other reasons, so that a Christian force would be prepared to repel Antichrist. The end of the world continues to loom in later crusade texts, especially those written in the thirteenth century. After Jerusalem was lost in 1187, five major expeditions attempted to recover the city or at least secure the remaining crusader states in the Holy Land. Each crusade, except for Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II’s brief recovery of Jerusalem (1229-1244), ended in utter defeat. Writers used apocalypticism to motivate crusaders to action or console Christians after defeat. Llull could have simply included apocalypticism in his crusade treatises to keep with the traditions of previous crusade authors.

Yet Llull had other reasons to include apocalypticism, and more importantly a Joachimist-influenced apocalypticism, in his treatises. Joachimist ideas spread throughout Mediterranean Europe, particularly in the Crown of Aragon, due to the War of the Sicilian
Vespers and the controversial Spiritual Franciscan party. The war, as mentioned above, pitted the Spanish and French dynasties, known respectively as the House of Barcelona and House of Anjou, against one another for control of Sicily. The war began with the Sicilians’ rebellion against Charles I of Anjou’s government on Easter Monday, 1282. The war also took its name from this rebellion. The Sicilians’ revolted at Vespers, the evening prayer at sunset according to the canonical hours. King Peter III of Aragon took advantage of this political discontent to press his claim for the throne of Sicily. Peter’s wife Constance was the daughter of Manfred, the previous king of Sicily whom Charles of Anjou overthrew. In August 1282, Peter was elected king of Sicily thanks to his ties to the previous rulers of Sicily and the rebel Sicilians’ need for aid against Charles of Anjou’s forces. Peter also became a messianic figure to many writers like the Franciscan chronicler Salimbene de Adam. These writers also portrayed Charles of Anjou as Antichrist. Peter, who would be remembered as Peter the Great for his military victories, seemed divinely favored as he pushed Charles’ forces out of Sicily and repulsed a numerically superior army of French crusaders attacking the Crown of Aragon in 1285. The House of Barcelona embraced this messianic image of their kings by welcoming numerous apocalyptic thinkers into their lands during and after the War of the Sicilian Vespers (1282-1302).

Apocalypticism, with a Joachimist flair, proliferated throughout the Crown of Aragon due to the influence and writings of thinkers such as Arnau de Vilanova. Born in Valencia a few years after Llull around 1238, Arnau studied at the universities of Montpellier and Naples. His studies allowed him to become a physician and envoy for popes, including Boniface VIII, Benedict XI, and Clement V, and kings, such as Robert of Anjou, James II of Aragon, and Frederick III of Sicily. Arnau exerted additional influence on the latter two kings as their theological advisor.

Arnau’s theology was filled with Joachimist beliefs. He indeed was one of the few thirteenth-century Joachites—strict followers of the abbot’s paradigms and thoughts—not just a writer somewhat influenced by Joachimist ideas. The titles of his works alone suggest he was a Joachite. His Introductio in librum Joachim de semine Scripturarum (Introduction to the Book by Joachim “On the Seed of the Scriptures”), for instance, is a commentary on an apocryphal work of Joachim. The abbot did not actually write this work, but Arnau thought he did. Arnau’s Expositio super Apocalypsim (Explanation of the Apocalypse) carries on Joachim’s Trinitarian division of history. In the Tractatus de tempore adventus Antichristi (Treatise on the time of the coming of the Antichrist), Arnau recalculated when Antichrist would arrive. Using exegetical methods just like Joachim, Arnau argued Antichrist would arrive in 1368 rather than the thirteenth century as Joachim had predicted. Arnau’s prominent positions at James II’s and Frederick III’s courts, although he and James ultimately had a dramatic falling out, demonstrate the House of Barcelona’s welcoming attitude toward apocalyptic thinkers.

Llull would have certainly encountered Arnau’s Joachimist ideas, because the two writers moved in similar circles. Like Arnau, Llull served James II of Aragon as an envoy. Llull clearly did not have as much influence over James as Arnau. The latter enjoyed an annual pension of 2000 solidi from the king, while Llull had to be present at court for a year, which he rarely was, to receive at most 1,460 solidi. A few years before his death (c.1316), Llull also visited the court of Arnau’s other major patron, Frederick III. It seems likely Llull and Arnau met on one or more occasions. Both made similar travels through the Crown of Aragon, France, and Italy. A letter between Llull’s Genoese friend Christian Spinola and James II suggests Llull was planning to meet Arnau in Marseille in 1308, but no evidence confirms the two actually met at that or any other time. Arnau and Llull did know, whether they ever met, about one another’s works. The two discussed similar themes, such as crusade, mission, and apocalypticism, in their writings. Arnau, in fact, called himself and Llull the
“two modern messengers of truth.” The Crown of Aragon’s most famous doctor, therefore, could be one of the sources for Joachimist ideas in Llull’s crusade treatises.

Arnau also influenced a group of Spiritual Franciscans in the Crown of Aragon with his Joachimist beliefs. The Spirituals were a minority within the Franciscan Order who believed poverty meant renouncing the ownership and use of all goods, except the barest necessities. This conviction in absolute poverty united the many groups of Spirituals, who otherwise held a great variety of beliefs. Many, but not all, Spirituals, for instance, held Joachimist beliefs. The two greatest Spiritual theologians, Pierre Jean Olivi and Angelo of Clarenno, were Joachites. Llull probably met Olivi while studying at the University of Montpellier in 1289. Olivi was assigned as a lecturer at the university’s Franciscan school by Ramon Gaufredi, General of the Franciscan Order, that same year. Gaufredi was close to the Spirituals and Llull. In 1290, he sent a group of Spirituals, including Angelo of Clarenno, on a mission to Cilician Armenia (southeast Turkey) to protect them from Conventual persecution. That same year Gaufredi wrote a letter allowing Llull to preach in the Franciscan convents of Italy. Pope Boniface VIII thought Angelo of Clarenno’s group of Spirituals disputed his election as pope, so he condemned them and dismissed Gaufredi as General of the Franciscan Order.

Llull probably attended the last General Chapter meeting over which Gaufredi presided in 1295 at Assisi. Gaufredi, despite his dismissal, remained a staunch supporter of the Spirituals and defended Olivi’s works in 1309. Gaufredi’s protégé Bernard Délicieux also had close connections with the Spirituals and Llull. He admired Olivi and was an associate of Arnau de Vilanova. He met Llull in 1296 at Rome, where Llull gave him copies of his Taula general, Tree of Science, and other works.

Joachimist influences in Llull’s crusade treatises could have come from Délicieux, Gaufredi, Olivi, or Arnau of Vilanova. Many members of the Majorcan court also held Joachimist beliefs. Llull grew up at court and served as seneschal to James II of Majorca before his religious conversion. James’ youngest son Philip became very close with Angelo of Clarenno, and like his brothers James and Fernando, he entered the Franciscan Order. James II’s daughter Sancia surrounded herself with Spiritual advisers, such as Robert of Mileto and Andreas de Gagliano, in Naples. Her husband Robert of Anjou, King of Naples, likewise supported the Spirituals and even wrote in their defense to Pope John XXII, who dissolved the party in 1317. James II of Majorca’s family further demonstrates Joachimist ideas permeated the late medieval Mediterranean world. How many Joachimist ideas Llull learned from James’ family is debatable. Llull was rarely in Majorca during the last two decades of his life, and most of James’ family did not adopt Joachimist beliefs until after Llull’s crusade treatises had been written. Philip, for example, did not meet Angelo of Clarenno until 1311, approximately two years after Llull’s last crusade treatise, De acquisitione, was completed. It seems more likely that Llull learned Joachimist ideas from Arnau of Vilanova, Olivi, Gaufredi, or Délicieux. James II of Majorca’s family, nevertheless, proves the Spirituals were an extremely popular religious group in southern Europe. The Spirituals, in fact, became so popular that modern historians agree “one only really knows a Southern European of this time—the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries—if one knows his attitude to the controversy over the Spiritual Franciscans.”

Llull utilized the Joachimist ideas circulating around southern Europe, due to the Spirituals and War of the Sicilian Vespers, to promote his conversion program. He knew apocalyptic ideas resonated with the rulers of the Crown of Aragon, so he included several apocalyptic passages in the Liber de fine (The Book Concerning the End), the crusade treatise he presented to James II of Aragon. He ended the preface of De fine, for example, with an apocalyptic warning:
This book contains material through which they [the lord pope, his cardinals, and Christian princes] could with Jesus Christ’s grace restore the world to a good age and unite it in one universal flock. If they indeed wish to do this, well enough. But if not, I am excused as much as possible. And hence on the Day of Judgment, I will acquit myself before the highest judge by pointing my finger and saying, “Lord, Just Judge, personally behold those to whom I have spoken and written, since I am better able to compose texts. I have shown them by recovering Your one, most true grave, the city of Jerusalem, and the Holy Land, they could, if they desired, convert and return the unbelievers to the unity of our Catholic faith.”

This warning not only showcases Llull’s apocalypticism but also describes the purpose of De fine. The book is far more than a crusade treatise. It contains more than tactics for a military campaign, although most scholars have focused on those parts of the text. It provides diverse methods, namely evangelical missions, crusades, and Llull’s Art, to bring the entire world into the Roman Catholic faith. That is the text’s main purpose. De fine’s title suggests it is a book about apocalypticism, but its real “end” is to spread the Catholic faith throughout the world. Joachim’s historical paradigms have the exact same purpose. They show how history has prepared spiritual men to spread Catholicism to all peoples.

De fine and Joachim’s paradigms also have a similar sense of urgency due to their apocalypticism, the sense of history’s end, or God’s divine judgment rapidly approaching. John Tolan mistakes this urgency for desperation in De fine. Llull had found little support for his conversion program before writing De fine, and Tolan sees the treatise as “a bitter rumination over the failure of his ideas, and a last desperate plea that the Pope, cardinals, secular rulers, someone [Tolan’s emphasis] take heed of what he is saying.” Llull certainly wants to grab the attention of secular and church leaders in De fine. Yet he never seems desperate or disillusioned with himself in the text. He may seem angry as he describes himself at the Last Judgment pointing out (cum digito demonstrando) the rulers who did not heed his proposals. He may even seem threatening as he suggests their dreadful punishment:

It is not permitted for me to know what kind of judgment there will be for those [who do not heed my proposals]. It only pertains to Him who has known everything throughout eternity. I nevertheless know and certainly expect . . . that God’s justice will be great. . . . Let he who has ears for hearing, hear what I have said. Let him fear the terror of the great judgment into his mind.

Here again Llull utilizes apocalypticism to oblige his readers to accept his conversion program. He makes yet another reference to the Last Judgment when God will severely punish the wicked—in Llull’s view, those who have ignored him. This use of apocalypticism does not constitute a desperate plea, as Tolan contends, but rather demonstrates Llull’s rhetorical skill. In the preceding passages Llull channels the widespread apocalyptic beliefs of the late medieval Mediterranean world into compelling arguments for his conversion program. He wants his readers to feel a desperate and urgent need to accept his proposals, but he does not feel desperate himself.

De fine gives no indication that Llull considered any of his proposals a failure. Llull indeed seems at peace with his efforts to spread Catholic Christianity. He maintains: “I excuse myself to God the Father, his most just Son, and the Holy Spirit . . . then to the most blessed Mary, mother of the Son of God incarnate, and to the entire court of heavenly citizens, since I cannot do more.” Llull, however, believes his readers can do more. The author claims that their failure to implement his plans is preventing the Holy Land’s recovery and the growth of the Catholic Church. He warns, moreover, that his readers’ failure is not unnoticed:
And Christ therefore will see who are his friends and who are not performing their duty. Their names will be written in his divine memory, righteousness, and power. And this writing will remain until the Day of Judgment. On that day they will be read, and thereafter ‘the door will be closed’ (Matt. 25:10). The good will rejoice when their names are read, but the evil will harbor resentment, grief, and anger at the sound of their names.

Llull considers himself Christ’s true friend. He has no reason to feel desperate or disillusioned. He has done his duty for the Roman Catholic Church through his writings and conversion program. Llull hopes his audience will do its duty and follow his advice. Otherwise the Majorcan mystic foresees a cruel, painful punishment awaiting them on Judgment Day.

These passages alone do not suggest a clear Joachimist influence in De fine. Their apocalypticism is too general. They suggest the end of the world is imminent, yet the world’s approaching end was a common trope, begun by Pope Urban II, in crusade literature. The Joachimist influence in De fine only becomes discernible when these passages are considered together with Llull’s frequent use of the word “status.” Llull peppers his first crusade treatise, the Tractatus de modo, and De fine with this term. It is the same term Joachim uses in his tripartite historical paradigm that divides history between the ages of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Llull uses status in the abbot’s sense of “age” about half of the time he refers to it in his crusade treatises. He frequently laments the evil age (malus status) in which the world has entered. He grieves that in his time:

There are few Christians, and still there are many unbelievers, who daily attempt to destroy Christians, who capture and usurp lands by multiplying themselves, who blaspheme by vilely denying the most holy, true, and dignified Trinity of God and the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who to the disgrace of the heavenly court possess the Holy Land.

Llull believes the world has entered an evil age because to him Catholic Christianity seems like the numerically smallest and militarily weakest religion. He recognized that Catholic Christians were surrounded by peoples of other faiths during the thirteenth century. Muslims controlled the southern tip of Spain, much of Africa, and together with the Mongols, the Middle East. The Mongols, along with Orthodox Christians, also controlled Eastern Europe. Pagans ruled in several regions of Northern Europe. These peoples often raided and occupied Catholic territories. The Egyptians Mamluks, for example, conquered Acre, the last remaining Christian stronghold in the Holy Land, in 1291. Llull’s crusade treatises present a conversion program to recover the Holy Land and “move the world . . . to a good age.”

Llull’s program intends to bring about this good age (bonum statum) by bringing all peoples into the Catholic faith. This plan may appear utopian today, but many medieval Catholics, as discussed above, assumed the entire world would be converted to their religion at the end of time. Joachim assumed as much in his two historical paradigms.

Llull and Joachim’s status indeed share several similarities. Both the Majorcan mystic and Calabrian abbot considered their present ages as times of trial and tribulation for the Catholic Church. Joachim believed he was living through the Church’s final persecutions between the age of the Son and Holy Spirit. Llull thought the Church was shrinking as non-Catholics encroached on Catholic lands. Both Joachim and Llull additionally maintained Islam was the cause of many Christian tribulations in their status. According to Joachim, Islam’s founder Muhammad, a North African leader named Mesemoth, and the Egyptian sultan Saladin led three of the Church’s seven persecutions. After the Holy Land’s loss in 1291, Llull feared Muslims would continue overtaking Christian lands unless they were
Both Joachim and Llull also expected Muslims and all other peoples outside the Catholic Church to convert during the world’s next age. Joachim foresaw spiritual men, purified by past persecutions, spreading the faith, while Llull envisioned his conversion program multiplying the Church’s followers. Pere Rossell, who taught Llull’s Art in Alcoy, Barcelona, and Cervera during the fourteenth century, recognized so many similarities between Llull and Joachim that he considered the former the Messiah of the abbot’s third age.

But Llull “only moderately [took] part in eschatological ideas.” He utilizes apocalyptic ideas in treatises like De fine, but he only dedicates one entire text, the Llibre contra Anticrist (c. 1274-76), out of his immense corpus to the subject of apocalypticism. Llull’s apocalypticism, moreover, does not have heavy Joachimist overtones. He never promotes Joachim’s historical paradigms. He disagrees with Joachim over important issues, such as the role of the crusades in history. Joachim initially supported the crusades, although he always maintained the spiritual men played a more important role in humanity’s salvation. He told Richard the Lionheart, king of England, that his crusade would recover Jerusalem and end the sixth persecution of Christianity under Saladin. Richard’s crusade failed, however, and this failure convinced Joachim that only the spiritual men could stop the persecutions of Christians. Crusading was futile in the abbot’s mind, and many of his Spiritual Franciscan followers, like Peter John Olivi and Angelo Clareno, likewise rejected the crusade.

Llull, in contrast, “shun[den] . . . the quietism and passivity” of Joachimist thought and vigorously advocated crusading, especially in his later years. He promoted violence against non-Catholics in his crusade treatises and several other works, including The Book of the Order of Chivalry (1274-76), Blaquerna (1276-83), Liber super Psalmum “Quicumque vult” (1288), Disputatio Raimundi christiani et Homeri Saraceni (1308), Liber disputationis Petri et Raimundi (1311), Liber de locutione angelorum (1312), and Liber de civitate mundi (1314).

Llull did not want his works to evince a strong Joachimist influence for fear of alienating papal support. Many popes favored the Conventuals in their feud with the Spirituals, even though the Spirituals were very popular, as explained above, among southern Europeans. Popes disliked the Spirituals because they feared the party rejected papal authority. Gerard of Borgo San Donnino’s Evangelium aeternum (c. 1254-55), for instance, claimed that the Franciscans were Joachim’s spiritual men destined to lead the Church.

Llull wanted widespread support for his conversion program, so he carefully chose his words in his crusade treatises to appeal to their intended audiences. Pope Nicholas IV, the first pope from the Franciscan Order, did not seem very hostile to the Spirituals, even though the Spirituals were very popular, as explained above, among southern Europeans. Papal hostility to the Spirituals was growing under the pontificate of its intended audience, Clement V. The former Franciscan General Ramon Gaufredi, in fact, defended Olivi’s works from renewed scrutiny the same year as De acquisitione was written (1309), and Clement’s successor, John XXII dissolved the party. Llull realized Clement disliked Joachimist ideas, so De acquisitione contains few apocalyptic elements.

Llull chose to include apocalyptic and subtle Joachimist ideas in his second crusade treatise, De fine, because he presented it to James II of Aragon, a member of the House of Barcelona. The War of the Sicilian Vespers and Spiritual Franciscans had made this dynasty very receptive to Joachimist ideas, and James was no exception. He indeed patronized Arnau of Villanova, as mentioned above, for much of the doctor’s life. Llull, who was also patronized by James, would have known about the House of Barcelona’s regard for Joachimist ideas, so he includes some in De fine. Yet these ideas, namely the world’s present evil age and future good status, remain subtle. Llull ultimately wanted De fine, like his other
treatises, to reach the papacy. James probably presented *De fine* to Clement V shortly before the pope’s coronation in 1305.\(^{xc}\)

Llull’s crusade treatises, the *Tractatus de modo*, *De fine*, and *De acquisitione*, prove their author was not a Joachite. Yet Joachimist influences surrounded Llull in the late medieval Mediterranean world. Unlike a utopian disconnected from his time, Llull paid close attention to these influences. He utilized the Joachimist ideas permeating Europe as persuasive devices to promote his conversion program. A skilled writer, Llull carefully placed in his crusade treatises apocalyptic words and images least likely to offend the papacy and most likely to attract the support of Catholic princes. Medieval Europe was drastically changing in the thirteenth century, and Llull wanted to ensure it was entering his idea of a good age.

---


\(^{vi}\) Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 3-4, 30-31. Many historians find the terms “apocalypticism” and “eschatology” synonymous, but McGinn sees a subtle difference between the two. Eschatology is the field of theology that concerns issues associated with the end of humanity, such as death, the final judgment, heaven, and hell. Apocalypticism is the belief in the world’s imminent end. The difference between apocalypticism and eschatology lies in urgency and emphasis rather than content. Apocalyptic and eschatological texts often discuss the same issues, but the latter discusses those issues for their own sake. The former discusses them to give significance to a certain time. Eschatological texts, in other words, give readers the impression the end of humanity will occur at some time, whereas apocalyptic texts show it will happen very soon. McGinn’s distinction, though in need of examples of purely eschatological texts, emphasizes the political and historical aspects of apocalypticism. This article highlights similar features of apocalyptic texts, so the term apocalypticism will be used in it instead of eschatology.

\(^{vii}\) Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1985), 18-19. In the Middle Ages chanceries issued and preserved charters, grants, and other documents for secular and religious officials, such as monarchs, bishops, and the pope.


xii Ramon Llull, Vita coaetanea, edited and translated as Ramon Llull: A Contemporary Life by Anthony Bonner (Barcelona: Tamesis, 2010), 33.


Reeves, “The Originality and Influence of Joachim,” 298.


Daniel, “Joachim of Fiore,” 84.


Reeves, “The Originality and Influence of Joachim,” 298.


Joachim of Fiore, The Book of Figures, 139-40; Daniel, “Apocalyptic Conversion,” 137.

John V. Tolan, Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 12-19. St. Isidore classified religions outside the Catholic Church as either pagan, heretical, or Jewish. Many Catholic authors, including Joachim, utilized this system until the late Middle Ages. Here Joachim only mentions Jews and pagans, but he also mentions heretics, unorthodox Christian sects, in other works.


Guibert of Nogent, Gesta Dei per Francos, translated as The Deeds of God through the Franks by Robert Levine (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 44.

Tolan, Saracens, 194-213. Pope Innocent III, for instance, used apocalyptic themes in his encyclical Quia major to promote the Fifth Crusade. The Dominican friar William of Tripoli made an apocalyptic prediction about Islam after the defeat of Louis IX’s
Tunisian crusade. He claimed all Muslims soon would be converted, exiled, or destroyed in his Notitia de Machometo, so Christians should not worry about failed crusades.


Notitia de Machometo, xlvi

Aurell, “Eschatologie, spiritualité et politique,” 191-94, 226-27. Pope Martin IV called for the crusade as retribution for Peter’s conquest of Sicily. The kingdom of Sicily was a vassal state of the papacy, which had granted the kingdom to the French House of Anjou.


Arnau’s calculations sparked a debate among theologians at the universities of Paris and Oxford over the orthodoxy of calculating the end times. The Dominican Order, moreover, began an inquisitorial trial to determine if Arnau was a heretic. The trial lasted from 1301 until 1305 when he was cleared. Arnau defended himself in a variety of epistles and tracts, such as the Apologia de versutiis atque perversitatibus pseudotheologorum et religiosorum (“Apology on the Asstuteness and Perversities of Pseudo-Theologians and Pseudo Religious Men”). These writings were not about apocalypticism, yet Arnau nevertheless used apocalyptic themes in them. He, for instance, had a penchant for calling his detractors supporters of Antichrist.


Jocelyn N. Hillgarth, Diplomatari Lullià: Documents relatius a Ramon Llull i a la seva familia, trans. L. Cifuentes (Barcelona: Publicaciones de la Universitat de Barcelona, 2001), document 39. p. 77; Hillgarth, Ramon Lull and Lullism, 104 n. 229.


Aurell, “Eschatologie, spiritualité et politique,” 196-97; “Arnau DB: Corpus Digital d’Arnau de Vilanova,” Sebastià Girait, James Mensa Valls, Michael R. McVaugh, Francesco Santi, and Sergi Grau Torras, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, last accessed February 7, 2015, http://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/arnau/en. Arnau’s calculations sparked a debate among theologians at the universities of Paris and Oxford over the orthodoxy of calculating the end times. The Dominican Order, moreover, began an inquisitorial trial to determine if Arnau was a heretic. The trial lasted from 1301 until 1305 when he was cleared. Arnau defended himself in a variety of epistles and tracts, such as the Apologia de versutiis atque perversitatibus pseudotheologorum et religiosorum (“Apology on the Asstuteness and Perversities of Pseudo-Theologians and Pseudo Religious Men”). These writings were not about apocalypticism, yet Arnau nevertheless used apocalyptic themes in them. He, for instance, had a penchant for calling his detractors supporters of Antichrist.

Hillgarth, Ramon Lull and Lullism, 70 n. 76. Arnau’s pension did not have a stipulation about being present at court after 1285. Schein, Fidelis Crucis, 271-72. A solidus was a unit of account in the Middle Ages. It was the basis for the former English currency known as the shilling and the former French currency known as the sou.

Hillgarth, Ramon Lull and Lullism, 129-32.

Jocelyn N. Hillgarth, Diplomatari Lullià: Documents relatius a Ramon Llull i a la seva familia, trans. L. Cifuentes (Barcelona: Publicaciones de la Universitat de Barcelona, 2001), document 39. p. 77; Hillgarth, Ramon Lull and Lullism, 104 n. 229.

Ronald G. Musto, “Queen Sancia of Naples (1286-1345) and the Spiritual Franciscans,” in Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honor of John H. Mundy, ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 179 n. 3; Reeves, “The Originality and Influence of Joachim,” 304. Debate surrounds the terms “Spiritual” and “Spiritual tradition” because they cover such a wide variety of groups. The utility of classifying these diverse groups under the same terms has been questioned but not resolved. This article does not focus on the differences between individual groups, so it retains the umbrella terms.
Late Medieval Mediterranean Apocalypticism

The Hilltop Review, Spring 2015

lvii Hillgarth, Ramon Lull and Lullism, Chronological Table and pp. 53-54; Daniel, The Franciscan Concept, 82.

lviii Angelo of Clareno, A Letter of Defense to the Pope Concerning the False Accusations and Calumnies Made by the Franciscans, in Apocalyptic Spirituality, ed. McGinn, 162; Antonio Oliver, “El Beato Ramón Llull,” 13.55-56. Many names have been attached to Angelo’s group, including the Fratacelli and Poor Hermits.

lix Oliver, “El Beato Ramón Llull,” 13.52; Hillgarth, Ramon Lull and Lullism, 54.

lxii Hillgarth, Ramon Lull and Lullism, 53-55; Anthony Bonner, “Ramon Llull and the Dominicans,” Catalan Review 4, no. 1-2 (1990): 387-88; Oliver, “El Beato Ramón Llull,” 13.55; Hillgarth, Diplomatarii lullià, 27.60-61. These books, which many churchmen considered heretical, were used as evidence against Délicieux’s orthodoxy when he was arrested in 1319 for poisoning Pope Benedict XI.

lxiv Hillgarth, A Contemporary Life, 31. A seneschal, similar to a steward, was the administrative head of the king’s household.


Llull, De fine, 251: “In quo libro continetur materia, per quam possent, mediante si vellent gratia Iesu Christi, ad bonum statum reducere universum et ad unum ouile catholicum adnire. Si enim hoc velint facere, bene quidem; sin autem, excusatus sum iuxta poss. Et hinc in die iudicii me excusabo coram summo iudice, sic dicendo et etiam cum digito demonstrando: Domine, iudex iuste. Ecce illos personaliter, quibus dixi, et per scripta, ut melius potui, demonstravi modum, per quem, si voluissent, potuissent convertere infideles, et reducere ad nostrae fidei catholicae unitatem, recuperando vestram verissimam sepulturam una cum civitate Ierusalem, et Terram sanctam.” The term “unbelievers (infideles)” is used as an umbrella term here, similar to Joachim’s use of the word “pagans” above. Unbelievers, however, refers to a much larger group of people. The term includes anyone who does not believe in the Roman Catholic faith, while pagans signify anyone in a religion besides Christianity or Judaism. The term “unbelievers” was offensive in the Middle Ages and remains so today. It is retained in this article for the accuracy of the translations. Raimon Panikkar Alemany, “Intercultural and Intrareligious Dialogue According to Ramon Llull,” Catalònia 43 (October 1995), 32-35; Kent Eaton, “A Voice of Reason Amidst Christian and Islamic Jihad,” Fides et Historia 37 (2005): 25-33; Albrecht Classen, “Early Outreaches from Medieval Christendom to the Muslim East: Wolfram von Eschenbach, Ramon Llull and Nicholas of Cusa Explore Options to Communicate with Representatives of Arabic Islam; Tolerance Already in the Middle Ages?,” Studia Neophilologica 84 (2012): 151-65. Llull’s use of the term also demonstrates he was not as tolerant as modern scholarship has suggested.

Llull, De fine, 251: “In quo libro continetur materia, per quam possent, mediante si vellent gratia Iesu Christi, ad bonum statum reducere universum et ad unum ouile catholicum adnire. Si enim hoc velint facere, bene quidem; sin autem, excusatus sum iuxta poss. Et hinc in die iudicii me excusabo coram summo iudice, sic dicendo et etiam cum digito demonstrando: Domine, iudex iuste. Ecce illos personaliter, quibus dixi, et per scripta, ut melius potui, demonstravi modum, per quem, si voluissent, potuissent convertere infideles, et reducere ad nostrae fidei catholicae unitatem, recuperando vestram verissimam sepulturam una cum civitate Ierusalem, et Terram sanctam.” The term “unbelievers (infideles)” is used as an umbrella term here, similar to Joachim’s use of the word “pagans” above. Unbelievers, however, refers to a much larger group of people. The term includes anyone who does not believe in the Roman Catholic faith, while pagans signify anyone in a religion besides Christianity or Judaism. The term “unbelievers” was offensive in the Middle Ages and remains so today. It is retained in this article for the accuracy of the translations. Raimon Panikkar Alemany, “Intercultural and Intrareligious Dialogue According to Ramon Llull,” Catalònia 43 (October 1995), 32-35; Kent Eaton, “A Voice of Reason Amidst Christian and Islamic Jihad,” Fides et Historia 37 (2005): 25-33; Albrecht Classen, “Early Outreaches from Medieval Christendom to the Muslim East: Wolfram von Eschenbach, Ramon Llull and Nicholas of Cusa Explore Options to Communicate with Representatives of Arabic Islam; Tolerance Already in the Middle Ages?,” Studia Neophilologica 84 (2012): 151-65. Llull’s use of the term also demonstrates he was not as tolerant as modern scholarship has suggested.

Lxix Aziz S. Atiya, The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages, 2nd ed. (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1970); Sylvia Schein, Fideles Crucis: The Papacy, the West, and the Recovery of the

The Hilltop Review, Spring 2015

Tolan, Saracens, 268.

Llull, De fine, 251-52: “Tunc super ipsos iudicium quale erit, non est licitum mihi scire; solum illi pertinet, qui scit omnia ab aeterno. Tamen bene scio et firmiter recognosco . . . quod Dei iustitia in iudicio erit magna. . . . qui habet aures audiendi, audiat hoc, quod dixi, et feruenter in terrore magni iudicii suum imprimat intellectum.”

Llull, De fine, 250: “Excuso me Deo Patri et etiam iustissimo suo Nato et sancto Spiritui . . . deinde beatissimae Virgini, genitrici Dei filii incarnati, et toti curiae ciuium supernorum. Quoniam in isto negotio facere plus non possum.”


Llull, Tractatus, 336, 345, 348, 351; De fine, 250-51, 258, 283, 289.

Daniel, “Joachim of Fiore,” 73. Status means “state” or “condition” the other half of the times Llull uses it.

Llull, De fine, 250: “pauci sunt christiani, et tamen multi sunt infideles, qui conantur cotidie, ut ipsos destruat christianos, et multiplicando se eorum terras capitum et usurpant, sanctissimam Dei ueram et dignissimam trinitatem ac Domini nostri Iesu Christi incarnationem beatissimam blasphemant, uiliter abnegando, et ad dedecus caelestis curiae possident Terram sanctam.”

Llull, Tractatus de modo, 351: “mundum . . . ad bonum statum conuerti.”

Llull, Tractatus, 348.


Aurell, “Eschatologie, spiritualité et politique,” 199: “ne participe que modérément de ses idées eschatologiques.”


Servera, “Utopie et histoire,” 202: “s’écarte . . . de quiétisme et de passivité.”


Reeves, “Pattern and Purpose,” 93; Daniel, “Apocalyptic Conversion,” 129; Lawrence, The Friars, 56.

Schein, Fideles Crucis, 87.

Hillgarth, Ramon Lull and Lullism, 53; Musto, “Queen Sancia of Naples,” 196.

Hillgarth, Ramon Lull and Lullism, 65.