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Source: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 64 (2001), pp. 281-295
Published by: The Warburg Institute
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/751564
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Notes

JOACHIM OF FIORE AND THE IMAGES OF THE APOCALYPSE ACCORDING TO ST JOHN*

Marjorie Reeves

As the recent exhibition at the British Museum (1999–2000) has magnificently shown, the rapid and dramatic succession of images in the Apocalypse or Book of Revelation[1] has driven the human imagination to visual image-making from as early as the fourth century to the present day. In every kind of style, embodying changing cultures, from the medieval devout to the present day search for meaning, artists have sought to 'represent the unrepresentable'.[2]

The exhibition brought together a rich collection of medieval illustrated apocalypses. Their artists speak from the page in the devotion they lavish on the detail of each mysterious scene. This drama of Last Things was very close to their lives, but in imagination many could only grasp it in terms of literal representation reducing the cosmic Ending of Time scenario by bringing it within the limits of their picture frames. For some, however, the pictures contained coded messages.

From this great exhibition the *figurae* of Joachim of Fiore were a startling omission. True, only one example in his *Liber figurarum*[3] is a direct representation of an Apocalypse image: the *Draco magnus et rufus* of Apocalypse 12.3, with its seven heads and tail; but Joachim wrote a long *Expositio in Apocalypsim* as well as a shorter *tractatus*.[4] It is all the more interesting to observe how, in both his expositions and the *figurae*, he broke with the medieval representational tradition, translating apocalyptic images into a kind of cosmic geometry. Before examining some of these, it is necessary to note that for the abbot of Fiore this final drama of the time-process did not stand in isolation: it was the last act in a drama of seven world ages, embracing the whole of the world's history. He drew his images and symbols from every age; and consequently, when expounding the Apocalypse he interprets these symbols from the long perspective of history rather than envisaging a crowded stage of Last Things to come.[5]

There are two concepts which, in particular, give structure to Joachim's theology of history: concords and seals. Concords supply the framework to his *Liber concordie*. Everything which happened in the Old Dispensation, recorded in the Old Testament, has its own actuality in time, but is also a secret sign pointing forward to a future happening in the New Dispensation, which is or will be a fuller disclosure of God's purpose for humanity. In the *Liber figurarum* these concords are visually represented in parallel diagrams of events, people and persecutions and in trees of history. The concept of seals, of course, is taken straight from the Apocalypse and is expounded throughout Joachim's second main work, the *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, as well

* Abbreviations:
Figurae = M. Reeves and B. Hirsch-Reich, *The 'figurae' of Joachim of Fiore*, Oxford 1972;
Influence = M. Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages. A Study in Joachimism*, Oxford 1969, repr. 2000 (revised edn Notre Dame, Indiana 1991).

1. In this essay I have used the word Apocalypse to denote the last book in the Bible, commonly entitled in English 'The Revelation of St John the Divine'.

2. *The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things to Come*, ed. F. Carey, London 1999, p. 43.

3. On the genuine character of the *Liber figurarum* see *Figurae*, pp. 75–98. All the illustrations in this Note are taken from Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 255A. The reasons for judging this to be the oldest manuscript and closest to the archetype are discussed in *Figurae*, pp. 99–101.

4. See *Influence*, Appendix A, pp. 513–14.

5. For brief accounts of Joachim's theology of history see *Influence*, pp. 16–27; and *Figurae*, pp. 1–19.

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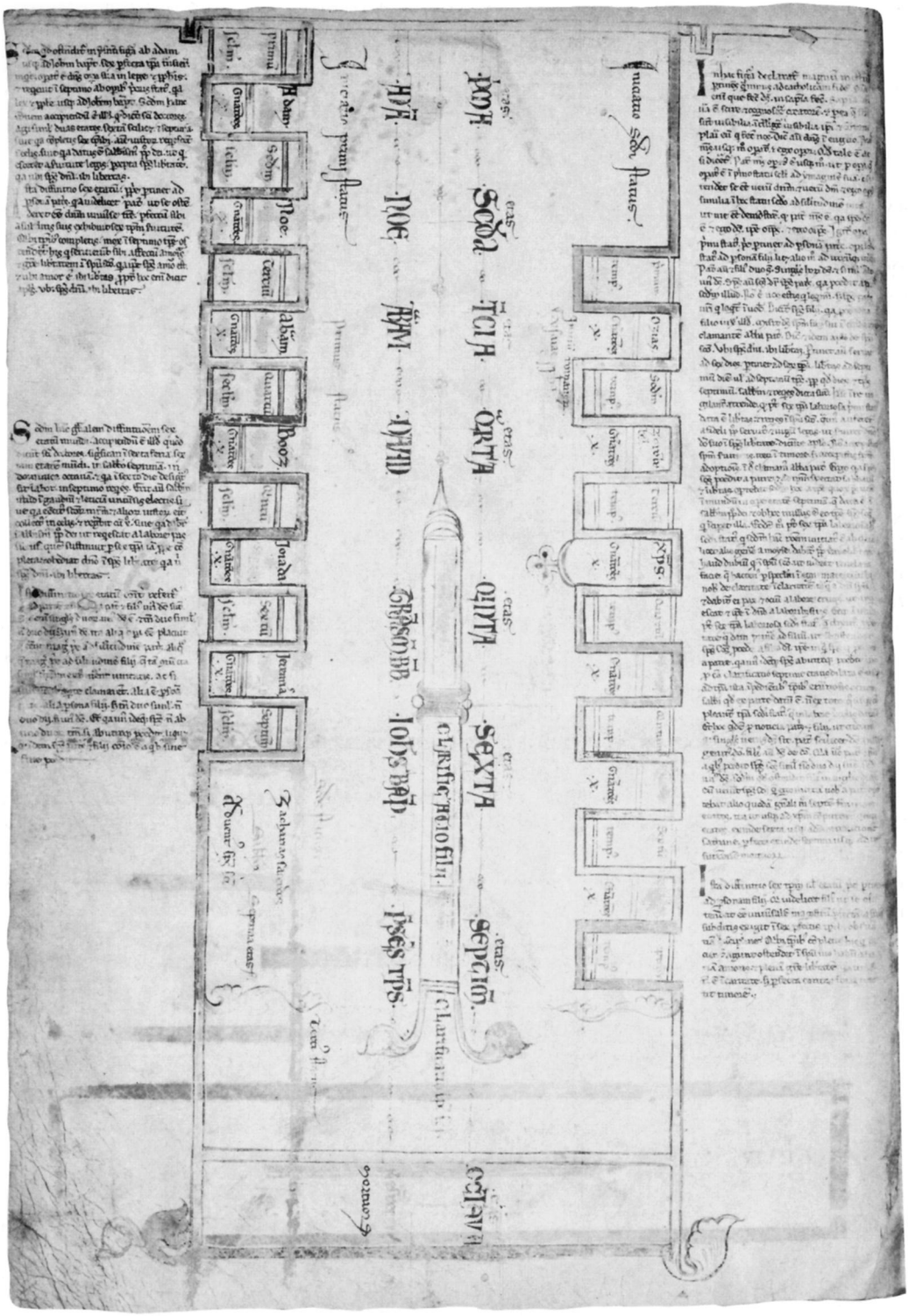

153. Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 255A, fol. 16v

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as in two particular drawings of the *Liber figurarum*. The essential point is that the book of history is sealed with seven seals and cannot be opened and read until the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, 'prevails' to open it (Apocalypse 5.1–5). As with the concords, God's purposes remain secret throughout the seven periods of Old Testament history and can only be 'opened' after the Incarnation ushers in the new age. Both concords and seals form patterns of twos, but out of these grow Joachim's famous patterns of threes. Joachim's concept of history as a divine pattern of 'twos and threes' is probably unique in medieval thought. The two patterns exist simultaneously. On the one hand there are only two dispensations in history, revealed in the Old and New Testaments. These stand as immovable pillars. Figuratively, they are the two cherubim guarding the ark of God's presence. But, just as the Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son, so the *spiritualis intellectus* of the third *status* proceeds from both ('ex utroque': *Liber concordie*, fol. 18^{v}). This is not a superseding third dispensation but a further stage of illumination, of understanding that which has already been revealed. Joachim expresses this in many sequences of threes, such as Synagogue, Church, *Ecclesia spiritualis*.

The Abbot derives from the image of the sealed book a geometric design of double sevens (Fig. 153). He does not follow the imagery of the openings in Apocalypse 5–8, until the seventh seal is reached. On one side of his figure the seven closed periods of Old Testament history are set out, while, opposite but overlapping, the seven openings track the gradual clarification of divine purpose to the end of history.[6] This process of gradual revelation becomes more explicit in the captions, which mark the stages of *primus status*, *secundus status* and *tercius status*. Into the pattern of double sevens Joachim also incorporates the well-known pattern of seven world ages (*etates*), corresponding to the seven days of creation. And here he returns to the seventh seal opening in Apocalypse 8.1: 'And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.' For Joachim this is a prime symbol of the sabbath age of history, which he equates with the third *status* in his trinitarian pattern of history. A small detail in the sequence of *etates* reveals another aspect of Joachim's thought: there is an *octava etas* beyond the seventh. This marks his clear distinction between the apotheosis of history in the seventh age and the state of perfection beyond history. Within time everything must finally deteriorate, even in the third *status*: perfection lives only in eternity. This truth, as we shall see, is clearly stated in Joachim's dragon figure.

Within this geometric frame Joachim places a new key image drawn from a different context in the Apocalypse, the *tuba ductilis* which relates to Apocalypse 1.10, 11: 'I ... heard behind me a great voice, as if of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.' In Joachim's figure this trumpet extends down the centre. It is represented as an extended instrument of a trombone type; at its mouth (parallel with the seventh seal opening), the words 'Clarificatio Spiritus Sancti' appear; and the *flatus* bursts in sprigs of foliage as the climax of history approaches in the third *status*. The seals clearly formed an important symbol for Joachim. He wrote a separate little treatise, *De septem sigillis*, which gained a considerable circulation of its own, used among others by preachers such as St Bernardino of Siena.[7] Instead of focusing the interpretation of the seals on the last act of

6. See *Figurae*, p. 9, for a diagram showing the 'germination' of the second stage of history beginning in the time of Ozias, and the third stage as germinating in the days first of Elijah and Elisha and secondly in the days of St Benedict. The theological basis for these overlapping stages lies in Joachim's emphasis on the principle that, although one person of the Trinity is assigned to one stage, all three persons of the Trinity are at work in every stage, while the double Procession of the Spirit from both Father and Son requires the beginnings of the third stage in both the first and the second stages.

7. See the edition of M. Reeves and B. Hirsch-Reich, in 'The Seven Seals in the Writings of Joachim

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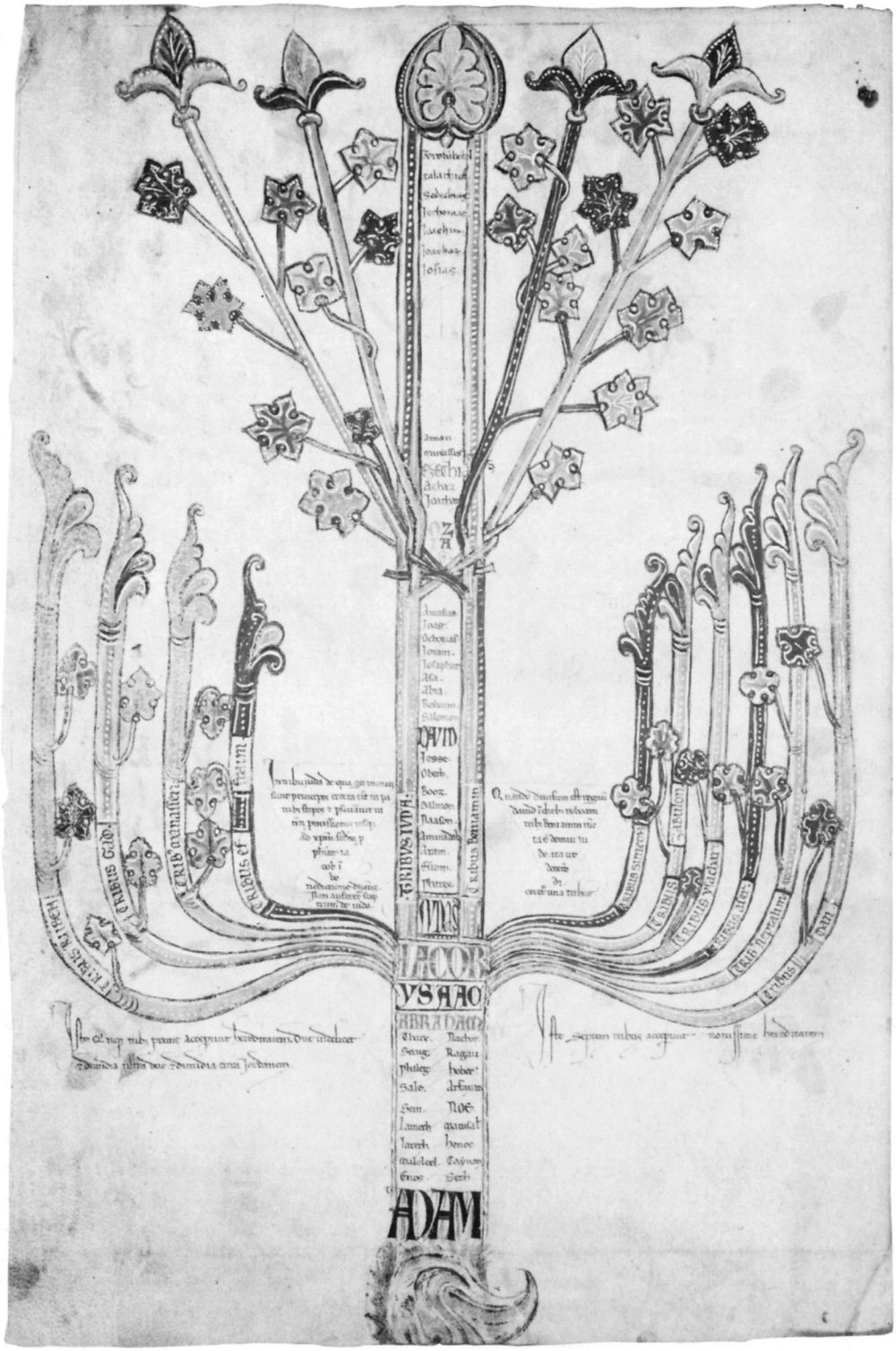

154. Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 255A, fol. 10v

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history, he drew a meaning which affirmed the thrust of divine revelation throughout the whole sweep of history.

Joachim's most distinctive number pattern arises from an uneven division of the sacred number twelve into a progressive sequence of five and seven.[8] From this he draws a complex and extensive range of interpretations, most fully assembled in the strange figure of the eagle in his *Psalterium decem chordarum* (Fig. 155).[9] What sparked off this 'number play'? It may have originated in a meditation on the movement from five outer physical senses to seven inward mystical gifts of the Spirit. Or again, in historical typology, it is possible that he sought the significance of the peculiar fact that five tribes of Israel received their inheritance first and seven later, which suggested to him a movement from the prior to the posterior, from half understanding to full understanding.[10] These clues may have been in Joachim's mind when he came to interpret the symbolic meaning of the seven churches of Asia to whom in the Apocalypse St John is commanded to write. Since St John is always, for Joachim, the apostle of the third age, the seven churches fall into place, in concord with the seven tribes of the Old Testament, as symbols of those for whom the full inheritance of spiritual understanding is reserved. To match the seven churches of the Apocalypse, he finds the five in the founding churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome.

Joachim finally crystallises these prophetic meanings in a bizarre pair of figures, which can only be described as tree-eagles (Figs 154, 156). They have tree-characteristics, but of a very formalised type. The four-plus-one branches on one side of the trunk, matched with six-plus-one on the other side, resemble the seven-branched candlesticks of Apocalypse 1.12 as much as tree branches. On the first tree, the five and seven tribes of the Old Dispensation appear with the five and seven

155. Joachim of Fiore, *Psalterium decem chordarum* (Venice 1527), Frankfurt am Main 1965, fol. 268r

names completed by a name on each side of the trunk. Similarly, the five and seven churches are named on the branches and trunk of the second tree, first the five 'prior' churches and then the seven 'posterior' churches of Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and the Laodicea. Here it is notable that Philadelphia, the church most pleasing to God according to the Apocalypse, becomes for Joachim a symbol of the *Ecclesia Spiritualis* in the third *status*.

But there is a further image incorporated into this complex pair of figures: at the base of each tree-trunk is an eagle's head. Thus, when turned upside down, the trees become a pair of heraldic eagles with richly ornamented wings. Here the context is yet another image

of Fiore', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, XXI, 1954, pp. 239–47; see also *Influence*, p. 232.

8. See *Influence*, pp. 25–26; *Figurae*, pp. 13–19.

9. *Psalterium decem chordarum*, Venice 1527 (facs. edn Frankfurt am Main 1965), fol. 268r.

10. See Joshua 18.2.

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taken from Ezechiel 1, which is the basis for St John's vision of the heavenly court in Apocalypse 4.7, i.e. that of the four 'living creatures' or *animalia*. By tradition these had come to represent the writers of the four gospels. For Joachim the fourth, the eagle of St John, was a powerful source of inspiration to which he returned frequently; for it encapsulated his prophetic vision of the contemplative life in the Spirit, which would mount up with eagle's wings. Of the two trees the second is more richly decorated with foliage and lilies, the symbol of the third *status*, than the first. Thus the message of the seven churches of St John, together with the aspiring eagle, comes over in these figures as an affirmation of the new life in the age to come. It is small wonder that Dante appears to have seized on the rich imagery of Joachim's tree-eagles to adapt to his own symbolic purposes.[11]

Chapters 12 to 18 in the Apocalypse are dominated by the great power struggle of the cosmic forces of good and evil, the 'war in heaven' (12.7) replicated on earth in the present political threat of the Beast and Babylon, contrasting with the hope for the New Jerusalem. The dramatic narratives of these chapters are transmuted by Joachim into a pair of geometric figures which seem to strike an alien note among his other *figurae*. In general, the *Liber figurarum* expresses in a variety of ways the forward movement of divine purpose through the entire time process towards its apotheosis at the climax of history. This is most obvious in his trees of history, which, in true biological metaphor, set forth the growth of spiritual understanding from leaf to flower and flower to fruit. In striking contrast, his pair of Babylon/Jerusalem figures, though retaining a slight resemblance to the tree in a kind of trunk which is rooted in a man-made mound, essentially represent the shape of history by an artificial construction (Figs 157, 158). This is elliptical in form and circular in movement. In one version it resembles a wheel of fortune.[12] The confronting points of the ellipses are Babylon/Jerusalem in the first figure and Rome/Ecclesia in the second. The circular movement tracks the earthly journey of the people of God through the secular history of successive empires. They journey as pilgrims forced to sojourn in a series of alien *loci*.

Key to Fig. 157, *loci*

1. *Locus facinorum: Hur Chaldeorum* (The Place of Misdeeds: Ur of the Chaldaeans, from which Abraham issues forth)
2. *Locus carnalitatis: Egypti* (The Place of Carnality: the Egyptians)
3. *Locus viciorum conflictus: Siri et Philistei* (The Place of the Conflict of Vices: the Syrians and Philistines)
4. *Locus victorie: JERUSALEM : DAVID : PACIS VISIO* (The Place of Victory: Jerusalem; David; the Vision of Peace)
5. *Locus viciorum conflictus: Siri et Philistei* (as 3)
6. *Locus debilitatis: Egypti* (The Place of Debility: the Egyptians)
7. *Locus confusionis: Chaldei* (The Place of Confusion: the Chaldaeans)

Key to Fig. 158, *loci*

1. *Locus miserie: Babilonenses* (The Place of Wretchedness: the Babylonians – i.e. the Roman Empire, from which the faithful issue forth)
2. *Locus refugii: Judei* (The Place of Refuge: the Jews)
3. *Locus pugne: Pagani* (The Place of Battle: the Pagans)
4. *Locus felicitatis: ECCLESIA : SILVESTER PAPA : SPONSA CHRISTI* (The Place of Happiness: the Church; Pope Sylvester; the Bride of Christ)
5. *Locus pugne: Gothi* (The Place of Battle: the Goths)
6. *Locus refugii: Galli* (The Place of Refuge: the Gauls)
7. *Locus captivitatis: Alamani* (The Place of Captivity: the Germans)

Both these patterns can be documented from many references in Joachim's works, especially in the *Expositio*.[13] The point which immediately

11. Dante, *Divina Comedia*, Paradiso, cantos XVIII–XIX.

12. Dresden, Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv MS A.121, fol. 94^{r}.

13. See e.g. *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, Venice 1527 (facs. edn Frankfurt am Main 1964), fols 7–9, 17^{v}, 23^{v}, 134^{v}, 173^{v}–74^{v}, 190^{v} seq., 198^{v} seq.

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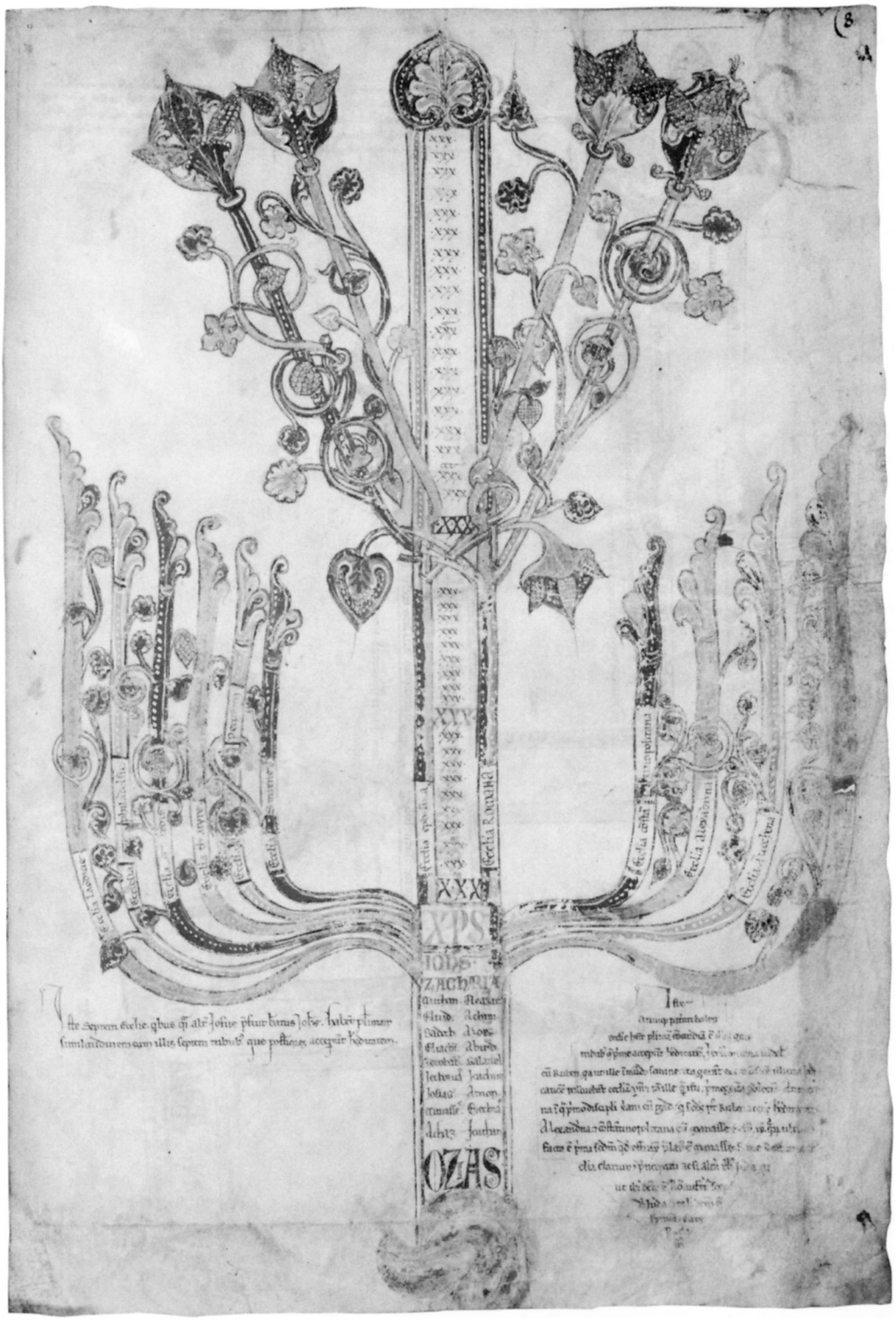

156. Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 255A, fol. 11r

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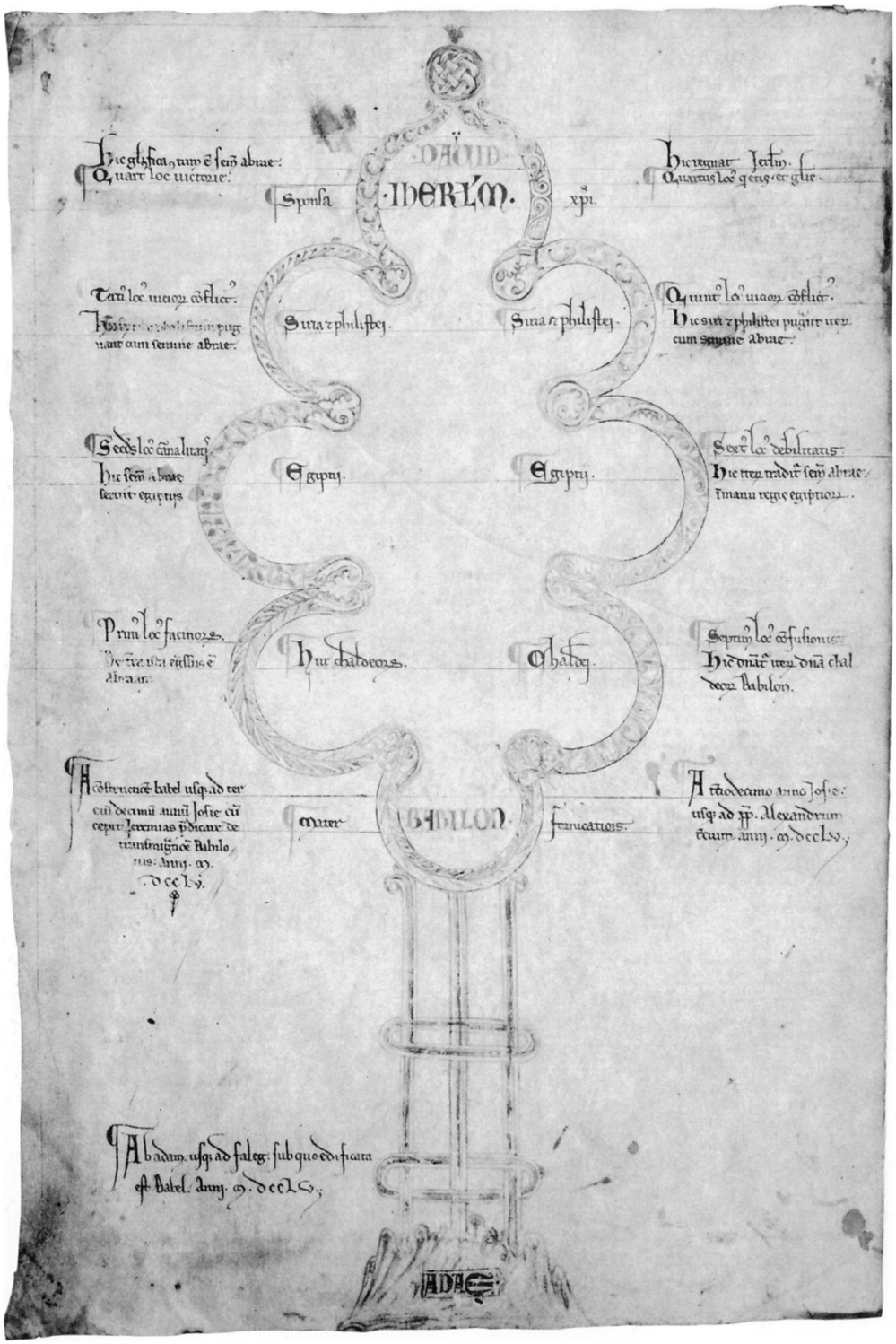

157. Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 255A, fol. 15v

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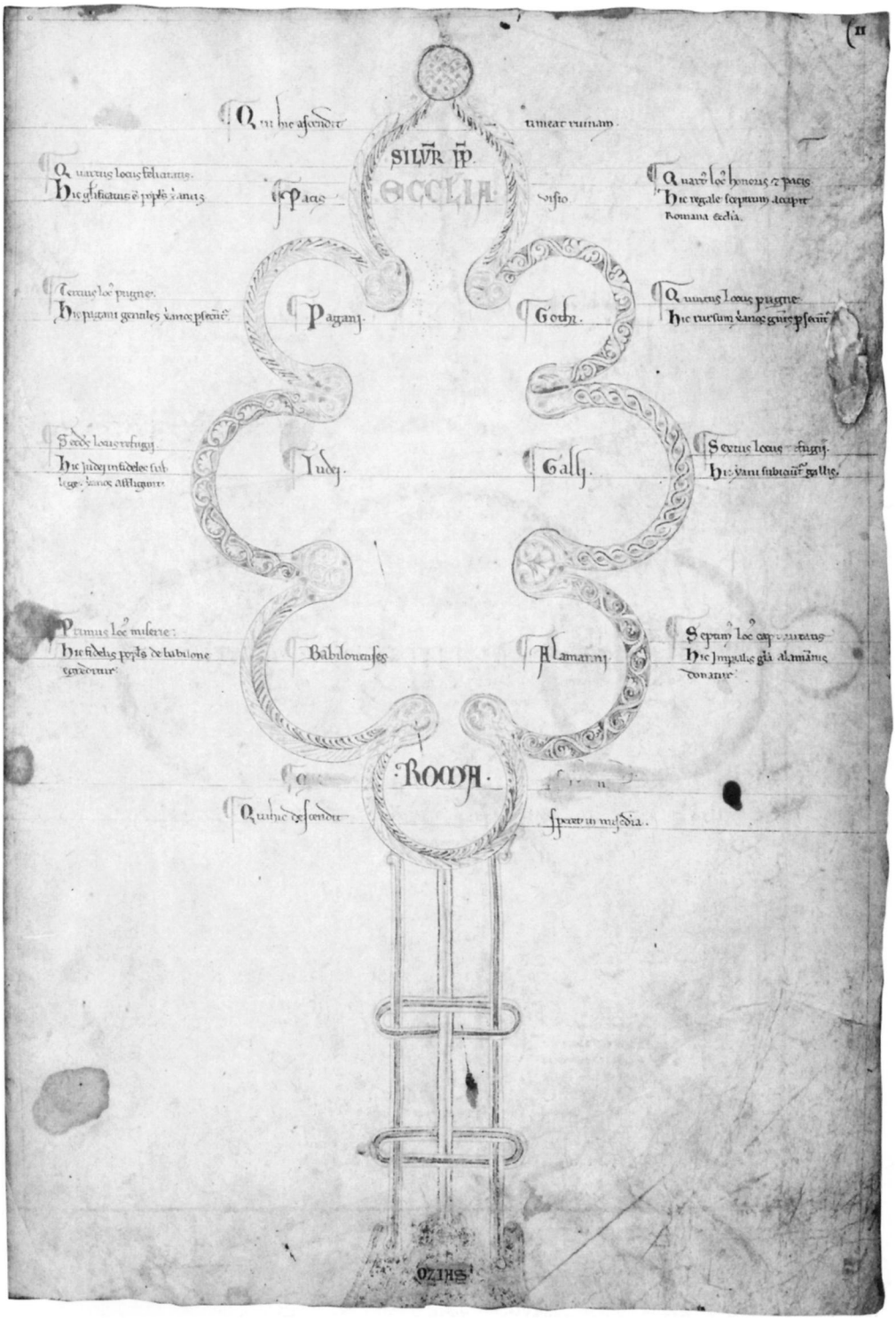

158. Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 255A, fol. 16r

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stands out is that, in the apparently hopeless movement from one captivity or persecution to another, two moments of freedom temporarily break through the vicious circle: David's triumphant re-possession of Jerusalem[14] in the Old Dispensation, matched by the release of the Church from persecution by Constantine, at the time of Pope Silvester in the New Age. God demonstrates his power to break the tyrannies of secular history, but the final battle will not be won until the end of the ages. This realism is reinforced by the element of repetition in the pattern: secular history repeats itself again and again whereas divine history is a one-directional movement.

In the daring equation of Babylon and Rome which strikes the eye at once in these two figures, Joachim laid himself open to the charge of heresy; and indeed, in his conversation with Richard I and his entourage at Messina in 1190/01, his listeners made the deduction that the Church of Rome was the new Babylon from his enigmatic statement that Antichrist was already born 'in Rome'.[15] Various critics and later followers drew the same conclusion. But a close reading of Joachim's writings shows that for him 'Rome' was always the secular Roman Empire, while the Roman church was always designated as New Jerusalem. Just as Ur represented the secular power under which Abraham, the father of the Chosen People, was born, so the Roman Empire was the political cradle of the Christian Church. Furthermore, even the Roman Empire is not to be directly identified with Babylon. It is rather the secular power designed by God to hold back the forces of destruction: that is, in the apocalyptic imagery, the River Euphrates of Apocalypse 16.12, which until the sixth angel pours forth the phial that dries it up, will hold back the invasion of barbarian peoples. Thus Rome only becomes Babylon when, drunk with power, it consorts with the Whore. Through this pair of enigmatic diagrams we catch a glimpse of a visionary imagination which, brooding on the whole sweep of history, sees two conflicting patterns: the glorious sweep of salvation history thrusting forward to its climax in eternal life, forever juxtaposed to the empires of this world, the Babylon of naked secular power under which the pilgrim people must suffer to the end. The diagrammatic form in which Joachim expresses these vast ideas seems cut and dried compared with the pictorial dramas seen by St John, but they are none the less loaded with the emotion of a true prophet.

The only figure which Joachim takes directly from the Apocalypse is the *draco magnus et rufus*, with its seven heads and great tail, which first appears in Apocalypse 12.3–4 (Fig. 159). There have been multiple manifestations of Antichrist throughout history, but the great red dragon embodies a concentration of evil in the political sphere which made it one of the best-known symbols in the medieval imagination. For Joachim it becomes a straightforward pictorial statement of the successive tyrannies under which the faithful suffer in the New Dispensation. There is no Old Testament counterpart. The focus here is on the time process in the New Dispensation, as the tempo quickens towards the climax of the final confrontation of cosmic good with evil. So Joachim identifies the seven symbolic tyrannies in the seven heads of the figure:[16]

Key to Fig. 159, heads of the dragon

(1) Herod
(2) Nero
(3) Constantinus Arianus
(4) Cosdroe, King of Persia
(5) Mesemuthus
(6) Saladinus
(7) Antichrist

Cosdroe represents the secular power under which the sect of Mahomet arose. 'Mesemuthus' was supposedly a Saracen king. Alternatively in other lists we find *unus de regibus Babilonis* or a German emperor. Saladin, the contemporary tyrant, is represented as a larger head. Joachim finds in the repetition

14. II Samuel 5.
15. See *Influence*, pp. 6–10; *Figurae*, pp. 86–88.
16. For variations on the seven heads given in the *Liber figurarum* see *Figurae*, pp. 86–88, 146–48.

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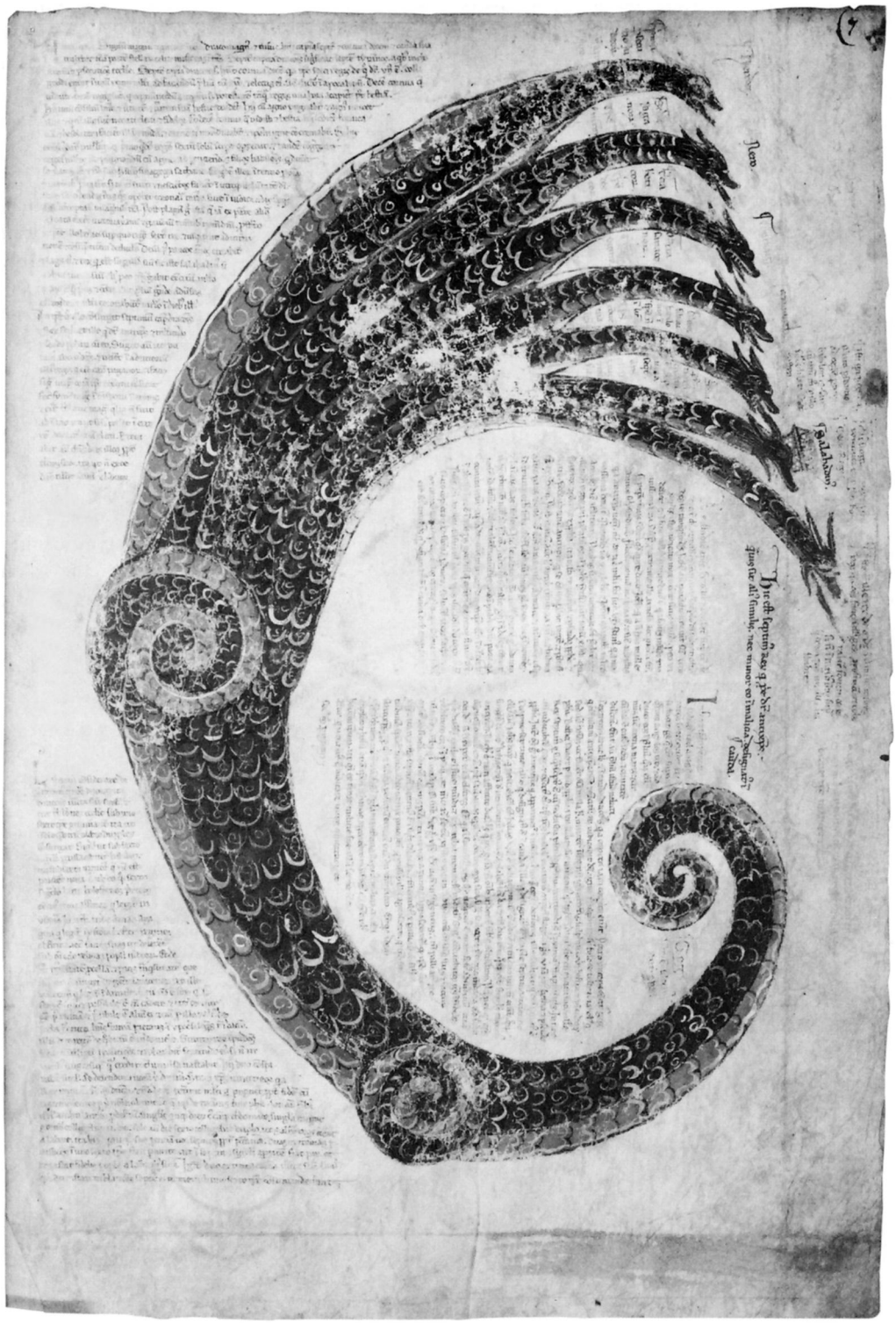

159. Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 255A, fol. 7r

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of the Muslim onslaught at (4) and (6) the explanation of Apocalypse 13.3: 'And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed' ('Et vidi unum de capitibus eius quasi occisim in morte: et plage mortis eius curata est'). The seventh and largest head represents the last and greatest Antichrist still to come ('et unus nondum est'). He is also identified as the *Rex impudicus facie* of Daniel 8.23.

The sixth and seventh heads are conjoined at the neck – a feature repeated in most versions of this figure. This is explained in one of the accompanying notes: there must be seven persecutions; but when the seventh seal is opened there is 'silence in heaven about the space of half an hour' (Apocalypse 8.1), which signifies the sabbath of history or third *status*. So there must be a double persecution under the sixth seal. Joachim describes these in various ways in his writings,[17] notably as a persecution by a pseudo-pope inside the church in unholy alliance with the infidel from outside. At the level of the dragons' necks appears a series of captions detailing the persecutions endured:

Key to Fig. 159, persecutions

Prima persecutio iudeorum. tempus apostolorum (The first persecution, of the Jews. The time of the Apostles)

Seconda paganorum. tempus martyrum (The second persecution, of the Pagans. The time of the Martyrs)

Tercia hereticorum. tempus doctorum (The third, of the Heretics. The time of the Doctors)

Quarta saracenorum. tempus virginum (The fourth, of the Saracens. The time of the Virgins)

Quinta filiorum Babylonis in spiritu et non in litera. tempus conventualium (The fifth, of the sons of Babylon – spiritual, not literal. The time of the members of religious houses)

Sexta persecutio inchoata est VII sequetur (The sixth persecution has begun and the seventh will follow)

In the three extant copies of the *Liber Figurarum* the dragon is drawn in a horizontal arrangement,[18] which allows for a space between the menacing seventh head and the curled tail labelled Gog. This forms diagrammatically a critical statement of Joachim's fundamental and distinctive belief that victory over the worst Antichrist will be followed immediately by the sabbath age of history, the third *status* of illumination and liberty which will last until the appearance of Gog heralds the end of the world. The text accompanying this 'space' drives home its meaning:

> ... Many impious kings and false prophets and Antichrists precede the one Antichrist who will pretend to be king and priest and prophet. ... Yet after the downfall of this Antichrist there will be justice on earth and the abundance of peace; and the Lord will rule from sea to sea and from river to the ends of the earth. ... The Jews too and many infidel peoples will be converted to the Lord and the whole population will delight in the beauty of peace. For the heads of the great dragon will be crushed down, and the dragon itself will be imprisoned in the abyss.[19]

But Satan will be released after the mystical thousand years when the hordes of Gog, the flick of the dragon's tail, will mark the prelude to the Last Judgement. As we have already seen, even the peace and liberty of the seventh age must deteriorate, for the seventh must never be confused with the perfection of the eighth age.[20] Joachim's concept of the millennium is far removed from dreams of a paradise on earth.

17. For the double persecution under the sixth seal opening see *Liber concordie*, Venice 1519, facs. edn Frankfurt am Main 1964, fols 5^v, 38^v, 41^v; *Expositio* (as in n. 13), fols 8^v–9^v.

18. That is, not vertical as in some Joachimist representations; see e.g. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS Vat. Lat. 4959, fol. 2.

19. '... Multi reges impii et pseudoprophete et Antichristi precedunt unum Antichristum qui se esse simulabit regem et pontificem et prophetam. ... Post ruinam autem huius Antichristi erit iustitia in terra et habundantia pacis: et dominabitur Dominus a mari usque ad mare et a flumine usque ad terminos orbis. ... Judei quoque et multe gentes infideles convertentur ad Dominum et delectabitur universus populus in pulchritudine pacis: quia contrita erunt capita draconis magni, et draco ipse erit incarceratus in abysso.'

20. See above, p. 283.

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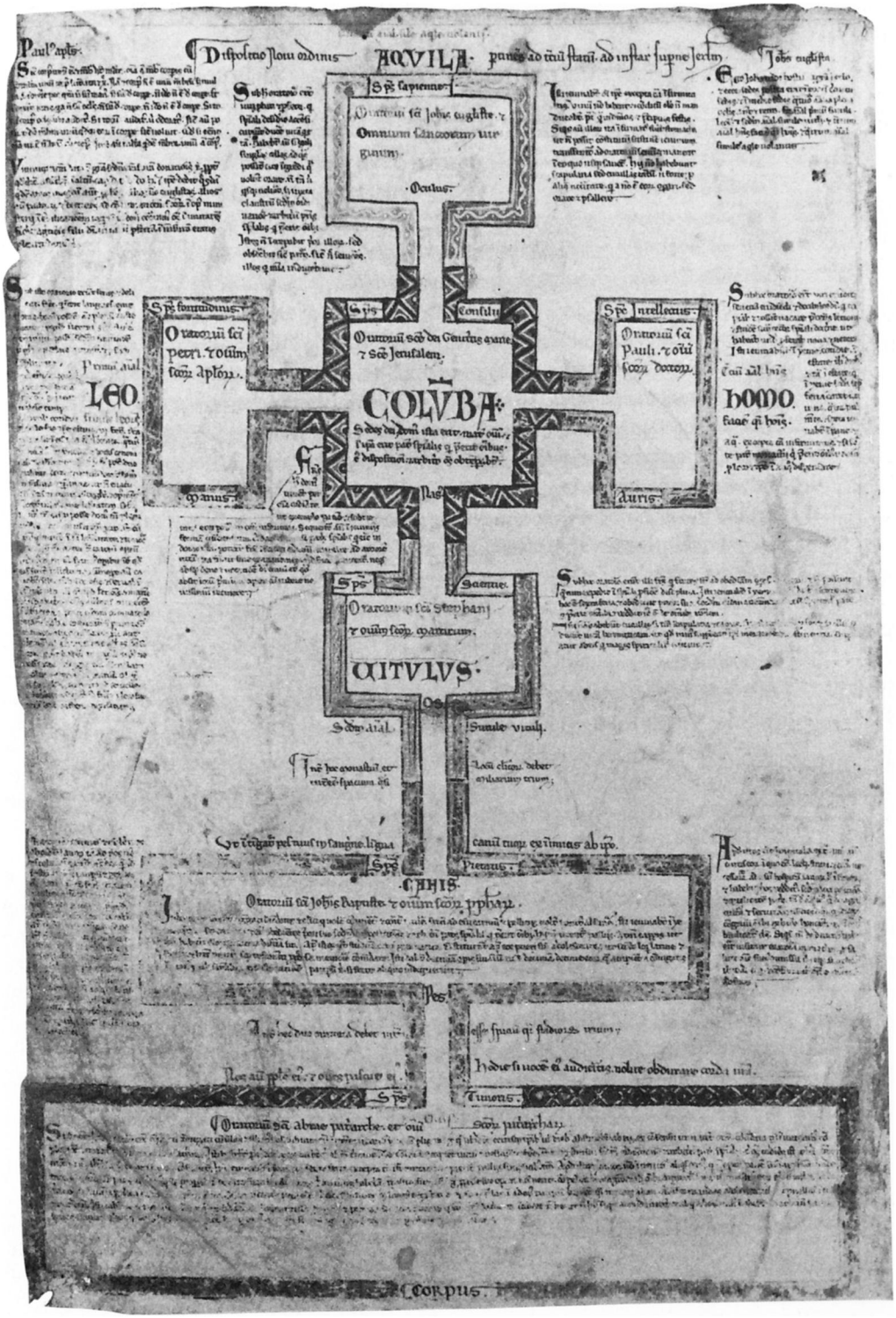

160. Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 255A, fol. 17r

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Just as Babylon, that great city, gathers to itself all the ruthless ambition and greed of the materialist society, so the vision of the New Jerusalem embraces all the longings of the ages for a different kind of society. The loving and symbolic detail of the holy city coming down from heaven, delineated in Apocalypse 21, moved medieval artists to depict it exactly, with its walls, its turrets and its gates. It is a romantic and haunting vision. Joachim expressed it in his *figura* entitled 'Disposition of the New Order as it relates to the third *status* after the pattern of the New Jerusalem' ('Dispositio Novi Ordinis pertinens ad tercium status ad instar Novi Hierusalem') (Fig. 160). But his *figura* is very different from the pictorial New Jerusalem. According to his title it can be seen as an architectural ground plan after the traditional model of the four-square New Jerusalem with additional *suburbia*. It can also be seen as a Maltese Cross with pedestal and predella. But what it really embodies is a vision of the ideal polity in the third *status*, expressing in careful detail the rules under which each group lives. The arms of the cross form four *oratoria* for the monastic residents in the city; they also incorporate the symbolism of the four *animalia*. Thus on the left – the seat of *Leo* – lies the oratory of St Peter and all apostles, where the *senes et delicati fratres* live. At the lower side of the square is the oratory of the *Vitulus*, inhabited by St Stephen and all martyrs. On the right – the seat of the *Homo* – is the oratory of St Paul and all doctors (the *viri eruditi*). Finally, at the top, presided over by the *Aquila*, is the oratory of St John the Evangelist and all holy virgins (i.e. contemplatives of both sexes). At the centre of this holy society is the *sedes Dei* where the *pater spiritualis* who presides over and rules the whole order lives under the wings of the *Columba*. There is a hint in the text describing the inhabitants of this oratory that they may form a bridging order between the withdrawn monastic communities and the world outside.

To a monk of Joachim's disposition the contemplative life was unquestionably the highest. Nevertheless, the life of the world must be embraced within the new society. The most surprising elements of this figure therefore lie in the pedestal and predella. True, they are not within the walls: 'between this monastery and the place for the clergy there should be a distance of some three miles' ('Inter hoc monasterium et locum clericorum debet interesse spatium quasi miliarium trium'). In the pedestal is the oratory of St John the Baptist and all prophets. Here are clergy who live under their own rule and serve the secular community by teaching and preaching. They work under the sign of *canis*, which in this context surely means sheepdog. It may contain an echo of a passage in the *Liber Concordie* where Joachim interprets the little dog who runs in front of Tobias as the *predicator* who in the last days will prepare the way for the conversion of the Jews.[21] Finally the oratory of the lay flock, the *oves*, gathered under Abraham and all patriarchs, lies at a distance of about three stades ('quasi stadiorum trium') in the predella. Here live 'married men living together with their sons and daughters and having relations with their wives for the sake of procreation rather than from lust' ('conjugati cum filiis et filiabus suis sub vita communi utentes uxoribus suis causa prolis magis quam libidinis'). They live in their own homes but according to a lay rule, fasting, working with their hands, giving to the poor and obeying their spiritual fathers.

Joachim lived in a period when lay people were aspiring to a larger role in religious practice. We see their aspirations taking shape both in spontaneous outbursts of fervour in local processions and demonstrations and in the growth of lay religious fraternities such as the Humiliati of Lombardy and (in their earliest stage) the Waldenses of Lyon. In his recognition of their validity Joachim's insight was truly prophetic of coming developments in

21. See *Liber concordie* (as in n. 17), fol. 117^{v}, for Tobias's little dog which, running ahead, is the type of a *predicator* in the Last Days.

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the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: the age of pure monasticism was giving place to that of friars, with their third orders and lay fraternities. The inclusiveness of this figure has puzzled some scholars, notably Herbert Grundmann, who felt that it must apply to a transitional stage leading to the third *status*, because it seemed at odds with the pure ideal of the contemplative model.[22] The intention to portray the full society of the future age as including seculars and laity is, however, confirmed many times in Joachim's writings, notably in the *Liber concordie*. The picture which comes across, with its rather touching practical details of the food, clothing and religious practices, as well as spatial measurements, is of a thinker who, for all his high vision, thinks concretely and has his feet on the ground of existing society.

There is one further element of complexity in this figure: its reference to Joachim's five/seven pattern discussed above. This, we recall, embodied the movement from a prior, outer understanding symbolised by the five senses, to an inner, posterior illumination symbolised by the seven spiritual gifts. Here the very shape of the figure seems to turn this interpretation on its head, for the five oratories contain those aspiring to the most complete spiritual dedication; and the crucial seven is only reached by involving the humbler aspirants. If this figure is a final statement of what the true society of the future might be like, it may be that its inclusiveness contained Joachim's final prophetic insight.

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22. Herbert Grundmann, in his seminal *Studien über Joachim v. Floris*, Leipzig 1927, led the way in modern Joachimist studies. After the war he returned to these researches, notably in *Neue Forschungen über Joachim v. Fiore*, Marburg 1950. Here he devotes the best part of a chapter (pp. 87–121) to a study of this *figura* (see p. 111 for the argument referred to here).

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