

## **THE *LIBER DE CONFORMITATE* OF BARTHOLOMEW OF PISA AND ITS SIBYLLINE AND PROPHETIC LITERATURE**

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### Resumen/Summary

El *Liber de conformitate* de Bartolomé de Pisa y su literatura profética y sibilina.

Escribiendo a principios del siglo XIX, el anticuario británico Algernon Herbert describía la fascinación de las revelaciones sobre el futuro entre los autores medievales. Y entre ellos, hubo franciscanos que se sirvieron de tales predicciones con buen resultado en su escritura. Acumularon, desde la muerte de su fundador en 1226 hasta el siglo XIV, una colección impresionante de interpretaciones de la figura de San Francisco que le asimilaron a las expectativas futuras de reforma de la sociedad y de la Iglesia. El texto de Bartolomé de Pisa ha sido publicado en dos volúmenes, en las prestigiosa serie *Analecta Franciscana* por los Padres Editores de Quaracchi, entre 1906 y 1912, con más de mil páginas impresas que presenta una amplia variedad de dichos textos proféticos: *De conformitate vitae beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Iesu auctore fr. Bartholomaeo de Pisa*. Este libro de las “Conformidades” fue escrito hacia el final del siglo XIV por el fraile menor Bartolomé de Pisa. En este artículo se ofrece un panorama de su vida y de su obra.

*Palabras clave:* Bartolomé de Pisa, *Liber de conformitate*, Literatura profética y sibilina medieval.

Writing in the early 19th century, the British antiquary Algernon Herbert described in these terms the fascination of revelations about the future among medieval authors. And among those who used such predictions to good effect in their writing were significant authors of the Franciscan tradition. They had accumulated, from the time of their founder’s death in 1226 up to the late 14th century, an impressive collection of interpretations of the figure of St. Francis that matched him

to future expectations about the reform of society and the Church. The Text is published in two volumes of the prestigious *Analecta Franciscana*, a text of more than one thousand printed pages that presents a wide variety of these prophetic texts: *De conformitate vitae beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Iesu auctore fr. Bartholomeo de Pisa*. This *Book of Conformities* was written toward the end of the 14th century by the Minorite Friar Bartolomew of Pisa.

*Keywords:* Bartholomew of Pisa, *Liber de conformitate*, Sibylline and Prophetic Literature.

Under a revelation which regards the future events of the world as well as the past it will always be a flattering idea to enthusiastic minds that the great affairs of the end will fall upon their own days or days not very remote from their own. Times of great alarm and change manifested as they are in the sight of those who are concerned with them seldom fail to call out this latent desire to appropriate to ourselves the future.<sup>1</sup>

Writing in the early 19th century, the British antiquary Algernon Herbert described in these terms the fascination of revelations about the future among medieval authors. And among those who used such predictions to good effect in their writing were significant authors of the Franciscan tradition. They had accumulated, from the time of their founder's death in 1226 up to the late 14th century, an impressive collection of interpretations of the figure of St. Francis that matched him to future expectations about the reform of society and the Church.

The Friars of the College of St. Bonaventure at Quaracchi, over a six-year period, from 1906 to 1912, published in two volumes of their prestigious *Analecta Franciscana* a text of more than one thousand printed pages that presents a wide variety of these prophetic texts: *De conformitate vitae beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Iesu auctore fr. Bartholomaeo de Pisa*.<sup>2</sup> This *Book of Conformities* was written toward the end of the 14th century by the Minorite Friar Bartolomew of Pisa.

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<sup>1</sup> ALGERNON HERBERT, «Antichrist in the Thirteenth Century», in *The British Magazine* XVI (October, 1839) 361.

<sup>2</sup> *Analecta Franciscana* (hereafter *AF*) IV, V, Quaracchi 1906, 1912.

The editors' critical apparatus of Scriptural citations and allusions, classical and ecclesiastical authors, including the prophetic texts to be examined here, make this work a monument to the scholarly achievement of the friars of Quaracchi, now located at the College of St. Isidore in Rome. In the years following the publication of the *Book of Conformities*, the scholarly review of the College, *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* (AFH), has frequently published articles touching on the vast work of Friar Bartholomew, only a small portion of which can be mentioned in this study.<sup>3</sup> Working with other members of the AFH Editorial Committee, I have learned to appreciate the mighty efforts of the brothers who have dedicated many years of their scholarly careers to the continuing publication of this honorable journal. For this reason, it seemed to me that the topic of a Franciscan book published by the College and an explanation of its prophetic sources might be an appropriate contribution to the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the birth of Fr. Francisco Víctor Sánchez Gil, OFM, an esteemed confrère and former editor (1990-2004) of the *Archivum*. To him goes the acknowledgment of many readers who have profited from the scholarly care with which he guided the *Archivum* during his tenure at its helm. It is the hope of many that this number of the review *Carthaginensia* may reflect in some small way that broad appreciation for his promotion of scholarly research on the figure of St. Francis and his many followers, of which Friar Bartholomew of Pisa may be counted as one of the most enthusiastic.

## LIFE AND WORKS

What little we know of Bartholomew's life and works is clearly presented in the recent, thorough study of the *Conformities* by his Franciscan confrère, Alessandro Mastromatteo: *Similem illum fecit in gloria sanctorum: Il profilo cristiforme di Francesco d'Assisi nel De Conformitate di Bartolomeo da Pisa*.<sup>4</sup> Friar Bartholomew was born in Pisa before 1338 and lived into the early 1400s.<sup>5</sup> He was destined for the University of Cambridge to

<sup>3</sup> See the numerous entries s .v. «Bartholomaeus de Pisis (Rinonico)» in *Archivum franciscanum Historicum (AFH) Indices Tomorum 1-50 (1908-1957)* Quaracchi 1960 ; and *Indices Tomorum 51-100 (1958-2001)* Grottaferrata-Rome 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Rome 2012.

<sup>5</sup> See RAOUL MANSELLI, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (DBI)* VI, Rome 1964, 756-8. This Bartholomew, identified as "de Rinonico," is to be distinguished from

pursue the master's degree, but was prevented from reaching England by the hostilities of the Hundred Years' War. Pope Gregory XI granted him the title of *magister* after he had completed the course of study at Bologna.<sup>6</sup> He taught as lector in the Franciscan *studia* in his hometown of Pisa, in Siena, Florence and Padua. Among the few elements of information available concerning his activities, the most significant concern his preaching and writing. Besides the *Conformities*, he also produced a large text on the life of the Virgin Mary, *De vita et laudibus Beatae Mariae Virginis*,<sup>7</sup> which may be considered a first attempt at using the notion of "conformity" to compare the life of one holy person (here, the Virgin) with that of Christ, a method to be used to its highest degree in his later work on St. Francis. He also produced two series of Lenten sermons (*quaresimali*) which have been published, one of which (given in 1390 at Florence) was dedicated to moral discernment (*de casibus conscientiae*), and another (1397 at Pisa) that concerned rejection of worldly values (*de contemptu mundi*).<sup>8</sup> Other works attributed to him are either missing or misattributed.

#### THE *BOOK OF CONFORMITIES*

Friar Bartholomew's *Book of Conformities* compares the life of St. Francis to the life of Christ, using forty similarities called "conformities" to illustrate the likeness of the Saint of Assisi to his Master. Some of the similarities seem evident enough, for example: Jesus healed lepers; Francis cared for lepers.<sup>9</sup> Others are fanciful or exaggerated: the child Jesus is held by Simeon in the Temple; the newborn Francis is held by a mysterious visitor who foretells to his mother his future holiness<sup>10</sup>. These conformities are arranged, both textually and graphically, as fruits on the branches of a great

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another Pisan author, Bartholomew "degli Albizzi," and the Dominican, Bartolomeo da S. Concordio," as explained by the Quaracchi editors in their Introductions to *AF*, IV, i-ix and V, x-xxix.

<sup>6</sup> Mastromatteo, 27.

<sup>7</sup> Venice 1596.

<sup>8</sup> *Quadragesimale de casibus conscientiae*, Lyons, 1519; *Quadragesimale di contemptu mundi*, Milan, 1498.

<sup>9</sup> Fructus XVII, *AF*, V, 130.

<sup>10</sup> Fructus IV, *AF*, IV, 109.

tree, beautifully illustrated at the beginning of the printed editions<sup>11</sup>. Raoul Manselli, in his biographical essay on Bartholomew, speaks of the synthetic expression of these forty conformities arranged on the great tree of the *Conformities* as among the “most significant expressions of the Franciscan understanding of Christ”<sup>12</sup>.

Along with extended lists of Scriptural texts that serve to demonstrate these conformities or similarities, Bartholomew also draws on a wide range of texts from classical and Christian authors, including both pagan and Christian prophecies. He also includes long digressions on early Friars’ houses and monasteries of Poor Clare nuns; and gives lengthy accounts of holy men and women, scholars and superiors of various branches of the three Franciscan Orders. The text also provides highly reliable transcriptions of many early Franciscan documents, from the writings of Francis himself to early hagiographical texts about him and his followers.

The *Book of Conformities* prospered, within Franciscan circles and beyond, for more than two centuries after its composition in the late 1380s. Its early popularity is attested by the more than one-hundred fifty manuscripts listed in the Quaracchi edition.<sup>13</sup> In the decade after that edition was completed in 1912, the editors of AFH published still more descriptions of manuscripts of the *Conformities* described by such scholars as Walter Seton and Benvenuto Bughetti.<sup>14</sup> Since then one or the other manuscripts have been added to the list through the patient efforts of other scholars<sup>15</sup>.

The *De conformitate* was printed three times in the 16th century: in Milan (1510 and 1513), and in Bologna (1590). A supposed fourth edition (Bologna, 1620) was, in fact, simply the “recycling” of unsold copies of the 1590 edition, with a few corrections. Though very popular in the century following its first printed editions, the *Book of Conformities* in its entirety has never been published in languages other than its original Latin, though

<sup>11</sup> Both, 1510 and 1513 editions, are reproduced in Mastromatteo, 54-55.

<sup>12</sup> *DBI*, VI, 756. He follows the opinion of ERNST BENZ, in his *Ecclesia spiritualis: Kirchenidee und Geschichtstheologie der franziskanischen Reformation*, Stuttgart 1934, 107 who called Bartholomew’s work “ein Monstrum von theologischer gelehrsamkeit.”

<sup>13</sup> *AF*, IV: XXV-XXXII; *AF*, V: XLIX-LX.

<sup>14</sup> WALTER SETON, «Two manuscripts of Bartholomew of Pisa», in *AFH*, 16 (1923) 191-199. B. BUGHETTI, «Una nuova compilazione di testi intorno alla vita di S. Francesco (dal cod. Universitario di Bologna, n. 2697)» in *AFH* 20 (1927) 525-562, examines one of Bartholomew’s sources in an Italian version by Fra Leonardo Bruni, OFM.

<sup>15</sup> See DIEGO CICCARELLI, «Un codice messinese delle Conformità di Bartolomewo da Pisa», in *Archivio Storico Messinese* 28 (1977) 85-107.

some extracts (mentioned below) were translated for polemical purposes. An Italian version of the *Conformities* was completed in 1543-44 by the Florentine Observant Friar and chronicler Dionigi Pulinari, its single manuscript in three volumes preserved in the National Library of Florence, but the translation has never been published<sup>16</sup>.

#### CONTROVERSY IN THE REFORMATION

Just before Pulinari undertook the immense task of translating the *Conformities*, in 1542 the German Protestant Reformer Erasmus Alber launched an attack on the book as a diabolical attempt to substitute veneration of a saint for true devotion to Jesus Christ. Alber provided excerpts in German of particularly controversial sections of the *Conformities* in a book with a preface by Martin Luther: *Der Barfüßser Münche Eulenspiegel und Alcoran*, (Wittenberg, 1542). The excerpts given in that text in turn became the basis for versions in other languages. Richard Grafton published one in English entitled *The alcoron of the barefote friers, that is to say, an heape or nombre of the blasphemous and trifling doctrines of the wounded idole Saint Frances: taken out of the boke of his rules, called in latin, Liber conformitatum* (London, 1550). Ironically, Grafton's printing house was located in the suppressed London Franciscan house, Grey Friars. Conrad Bade published his French translation of Alber's work as *L'Alcoran des Cordeliers: tant en latin qu'en françois, c'est-à-dire, la mer des blasphèmes et mensonges de cest idole stigmatizé qu'on appelle S. François, recueilli par le Dr M. Luther du livre des Conformitez de ce beau S. François, imprimé à Milan, l'an 1510, et nouvellement traduit* (Paris, 1556).

After 1590, no further editions of the *Conformities* appeared (excluding the 1620 reprinting), either in Latin or in translation, until the Quaracchi edition of 1906-12. It is hoped that the first complete modern-language translation of the *Conformities* will be available in the near future<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> From the Fondo Magliabechiano, Classe XXXVIII: cod. II, III, 162; II, III, 163; II, III, 168.

<sup>17</sup> A project undertaken by DR. CHRISTOPHER STACE, and intended to complement the three volumes of the New City Press edition of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, 3 vols., Hyde Park NY: 1999-2001. I am grateful to Dr. Stace for the English excerpts used in this article.

## PROPHETIC TEXTS AND THE LIFE OF ST. FRANCIS

Like many of his contemporaries, Franciscans, Dominicans and others, Bartholomew used non-Biblical prophetic texts with great seriousness in his writings. Many of the “prophecies” he cited had been produced only a century earlier, mainly in the context of struggles within the Franciscan Order, but 14th-century authors deemed them to be ancient and trustworthy, ascribing them to the Sibyls of classical antiquity and other seers, and some were accompanied by commentaries attributed to Abbot Joachim of Fiore.<sup>18</sup> The pronouncements of the Erythrean Sibyl, quoted by Bartholomew, and such texts as the prophecies of Merlin had their own *Expositiones* ascribed to the Calabrian abbot, and captured the imagination of Franciscan reformers:

Estos vaticinios [de las sibilas o de Merlín] mezclados con otros procedenes de otros ciclos, come el joaquinita, fueron considerados en el final de la Edad Media como verdaderas profecías, en especial por los franciscanos ‘espirituales’ y sus herederos. [...] aunque es cierto que los espíritus racionalistas *ante litteram* y la iglesia oficial los miraban con recelo<sup>19</sup>.

As can be demonstrated from even a cursory review of the first of Bartholomew’s conformities or fruits,<sup>20</sup> a variety of such prophetic texts supported the case that the author was making for the similiarity of the life of Francis to that of Christ. Yet the approval of the highest authority of the Order of Minors demonstrates the acceptance of such oracular or prophetic sources as appropriate in explaining the significance of the life of its founder. The General Chapter the Order, meeting in Assisi in 1399, indicated its esteem for Bartholomew’s approach to interpreting the figure of Francis of Assisi by approving the *Conformities* in these words:

The work which you have composed, with the favor of God’s clemency, and which is entitled *Of the Conformity of the Life of Blessed Francis to the Life of our Lord Jesus Christ*, we have had diligently scrutinised, discussed and examined, together with the tree, which you presented to us in

<sup>18</sup> The Quaracchi editors discuss Joachim of Fiore and his influence on the Friars Minor in *AF*, IV, xviii ff.

<sup>19</sup> ALAIN MILHOU, *Colón y su mentalidad mesianica en el ambiente franciscanista español*, Valladolid 1983, 221.

<sup>20</sup> E. g., Fructus I, *AF*, IV, 43.



person, and we have found nothing deserving of correction, only praise. While thanking you for your prudence in this matter, we hereby freely grant you permission, both to have the tree itself depicted, and to make this work known to those who wish to see and copy it<sup>21</sup>.

It is not surprising that the highest authority of the Order could give an endorsement of this kind to the *Conformities*. The Poverello of Assisi, portrayed as the Book of Revelation's "angel of the sixth seal" (Rv 6: 12) in the works of Bonaventure, could be interpreted, without great danger, by using the writings of such seers as Abbot Joachim, who is thus cited as an *auctoritas* from the very beginning of the *Conformities*.<sup>22</sup> Certainly, the Chapter's members knew there could be extreme views based on the writings of Joachim that were to be avoided, as clearly shown by the Order's condemnation of *The Book of the Eternal Gospel* by Friar Gerardo of Borgo San Donnino in 1258.<sup>23</sup> But a "moderate" form of Joachimism, like that of Bonaventure or Bartholomew, was clearly acceptable.

#### WORKS OF JOACHIM AND PSEUDO-JOACHIM

Bartholomew composed his lengthy text between 1385 and 1390; and for its composition he had at hand a diverse collection of sources. For the main events of the life of the saint he made extensive use of the texts of Bonaventure, notably the *Legenda maior*, and a variety of early hagiographical legends of Francis. But for the interpretation of those events, and of the figure of the saint himself, he also used prophetic texts, including those of Joachim and others inspired by his words.

Such authors as Marjorie Reeves, Bernard McGinn, and David Burr have directed our attention toward the Spirituals and their Joachite, prophetic interpretation of the Franciscan phenomenon<sup>24</sup>. As will be shown below, Bar-

<sup>21</sup> AF, V, 504.

<sup>22</sup> AF, IV, 44.

<sup>23</sup> The condemnation for heresy was issued in Paris by a commission headed by Bonaventure himself, as Minister General. Gerard died in Sicily in 1276 after eighteen years in prison.

<sup>24</sup> MARJORIE REEVES, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*, Oxford 1969 (repr. 2000); BERNARD MCGINN, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought*, New York 1985; David Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century After Saint Francis* (University Park PA, 2001).



tholomew took excerpts from Joachim's *Liber Concordiae*, including interpolated passages probably deriving from Franciscan circles.<sup>25</sup> He explains the theory of the "seven ages" as given in Joachim's *Expositio in Apocalypsim*<sup>26</sup> and uses it but without citing his source. He also quoted from works that today would be classified as those of Pseudo-Joachim, but which in the 1380s were considered genuine, for example, the commentary *Super Hieremiam*.<sup>27</sup> He also accepts as genuine Joachim's explanation of an oracle sent to him by a certain Cyril, a Carmelite of the Holy Land (the *Angelic Oracle*, to be examined below).

### The *Liber Concordiae*<sup>28</sup>

Bartholomew begins by noting in a general way by mentioning that the works of Abbot Joachim were approved by the Church, except for his condemnations of Peter Lombard. He then informs us that Joachim spoke of "blessed Francis and his Order in his *Liber Concordiae*." There follows a passage (interpolated) in which the "dove-like" Order is considered that of the Friars Minor in their gray-colored tunics, and the "raven-like" Order is that of the Friars Preacher, in their black mantles:

There will be two men, one from here, another from elsewhere, who represent two Orders, one Italian, to wit from Tuscany, and the other Spanish, the first dove-like, the second raven-like; and after these two Orders shall come another clothed in sackcloth, in whose time shall appear the son of iniquity who is called the Antichrist." And he continues: "Its time, i.e. that of the third Order, is very brief, just as the days of its successor the Antichrist are very brief; for the dove-like Order shall last until the latter days and cross the northern sea<sup>29</sup>."

That short-lived "third Order" may refer to the *Fratres de Sacco*, suppressed by Gregory X in 1274 at the Council of Lyons, an indication that

<sup>25</sup> AF IV 53-54.

<sup>26</sup> AF IV 74.

<sup>27</sup> AF IV 54-56.

<sup>28</sup> AF IV 53: *Liber concordiae novi ac veteris Testamenti* (Venice, 1519; repr. Frankfurt, 1964). For the modern, critical edition of Books I-IV (not V) see E. Randolph Daniel, ed., *Liber de Concordia Novi ac Veteris Testamenti*: Transactions of the American Philological Society 73: 8 (Philadelphia, 1983).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Reeves (182) identifies the passage as an interpolation to Book V, perhaps added at the point where Joachim comments on the "two men" of Dan. 12:5. *Liber Concordiae* (1519) fol. 133v.

this is *vaticinium ex eventu*. In contrast, the “dove-like” Order will endure, according to Joachim, “until the Day of Judgment in the commentary on the prophet Cyril above, and this was revealed to blessed Francis by God.” He then adds the (interpolated) predictions about the opponents of the Minors:

The most foul leech and the most poisonous wickedness of clerics will set itself against the dove-like Order, and they will try to trample on it and kick it but they will not be able to. For the Lord visits the Order and preserves it and guides it in its toils and hardships. The dwelling place and habitation of the Order is established in a refuge of sanctity and eternal steadfastness<sup>30</sup>.

#### JOACHITE FRANCISCAN AUTHORS

But besides using works he took for those of the Calabrian Abbot himself, Bartholomew also draws on the works of his Spiritual Franciscan disciples. From a careful examination of the two volumes of the Quaracchi edition of the work in the *Analecta Franciscana* the attentive reader can at least partially reconstruct the library of the Joachite Franciscan sources used by the Pisan Master in his work. Bartholomew cites the influential Spiritual Franciscan author Angelo Clareno,<sup>31</sup> reproducing the immensely valuable texts of Clareno’s *Rule* commentary, along with its very extensive citations of the *Earlier Rule (Regula non bullata)*.<sup>32</sup> He also cites the Franciscan theologian and dissident Ubertino da Casale,<sup>33</sup> also admired within the movement of the Spiritual Franciscans. With caution he also cites Peter of John Olivi (posthumously condemned by John XXII in 1327 for Joachite ideas expressed in his commentary on Revelation), naming him among the important members of the Order but not citing him explicitly when mentioning some of his ideas, whether those taken directly from his works or derived from the works of Ubertino<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> AF, IV, 440: Angelo or Gentile da Cingulo.

<sup>32</sup> In Fruit IX, Part 2: *Franciscus regulator*, AF, IV, 381-424.

<sup>33</sup> AF, IV, 440.

<sup>34</sup> AF, IV, 439. He does however explicitly mention the schism provoked by their influence, AF, IV, 541.

PS. JOACHIM, *SUPER HIEREMIAM*

Pseudo-Joachim's *Exposition of Jeremiah (Super Hieremiam)* is likely a product of the Spiritual Franciscans of the mid-thirteenth century, perhaps also drawing on texts from followers of Joachim belonging to his Order of Fiore.<sup>35</sup> Bartholomew has no doubt about the specific predictions of Joachim about the coming of the mendicants:

The same Abbot Joachim speaks expressly about the Orders of blessed Francis and Dominic in his *Exposition of Jeremiah*, in the prologue to chapter 1, at the verse: "The words of Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah: (Jer 1:1) etc., and in the same chapter at the verse "Do not say, I am a child" (Jer 1:6); at length he says the following: "Just as once God chose elderly fathers, then the younger apostles, so also now a third time he chooses literally children to preach the Gospel of the kingdom and to banish Lot in these faithful children through Abraham his high priest, to be a Christian people, that is, amid the surges of a fallen world, a decadent world and one acquainted with the sons of wickedness<sup>36</sup>.

There follow lengthy citations from the Jeremiah commentary, all associated with the Franciscan and Dominican Orders and their development. Bartholomew concludes confidently:

In the above places then the Abbot Joachim speaks of these Orders of Francis and Dominic, and from his words it is evident, as has been said before, that blessed Francis was prefigured many times in the Old Testament, a fact which must be noted clearly, lest this Conformity and Fruit seem to have been argued in vain. It is therefore evident that blessed Francis's coming was proclaimed by Joachim himself<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> *Eximii profundissimique sacrorum eloquiorum perscrutatoris ac futurorum prenunciatoris Abbatis Joachim Florentis scriptum super Hieremiam prophetam ... revisum ac correctum*, Venice 1516. This commentary was part of a large Joachimist publishing project promoted by Venetian Augustinians; see REEVES, 262. Another edition appeared within a decade of the first: *Interpretatio preclara Abbatis Ioachim in Hieremiam Prophetam*, Venice 1525. See also ROBERT MOYNIHAN, «The Development of the 'pseudo-Joachim' commentary 'super Hieremiam': new manuscript evidence», in *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen-Age, temps modernes* 98/1 (1986) 109-42.

<sup>36</sup> AF, IV, 53.

<sup>37</sup> AF, IV, 56.

### ABBOT JOACHIM AS ARTIST

A final contribution from Abbot Joachim comes, not in the form of writing but in that of a portrait in mosaic:

[...] and not only in his writings did the Abbot Joachim anticipate blessed Francis's coming, but also in his actions, because he had him depicted over the door of the sacristy in the Church of Saint Mark at Venice, bearing the stigmata, as can clearly be seen today. This is a work in mosaic.

Bartholomew is mistaken, as were other writers who described the same artwork, as the tradition of Joachim as an artist who depicts Francis and Dominic long remained popular. By the 18th century it was clearly established that the work was done after Joachim's lifetime<sup>38</sup>.

### SIBYLLINE PROPHECIES

Some of the more curious prophetic sources used in the *Conformities* are those representing themselves as the oracles of ancient seers and Sibyls.<sup>39</sup> The most complete study of this complex literature in the 19th century, and used for the Quaracchi edition of the *Conformities*, was that of Charles Alexandre, *Oracula Sibyllina*, which includes both genuine and spurious oracles, carefully distinguished.<sup>40</sup> Authors presenting themselves as Sibyls, but in fact medieval Joachites, enjoyed the prestige accorded to the genuine Sibyls and to the mysterious figure of Merlin in the 1300s<sup>41</sup>.

In the *Conformities* we can read extracts from several of these oracles which, for Bartholomew, point to Francis himself, to Francis and Dominic,

<sup>38</sup> GIOVANNI MESCHINELLO, *La Chiesa Ducale di S. Marco*, Venice 1753, II, 45.

<sup>39</sup> On this literature in general, see BERNARD MCGINN, «*Teste David cum Sibylla*. The significance of the Sibylline tradition in the Middle Ages», J. Kirshner, S. F. Wemple (eds.), *Women of the Medieval World. Essays in honor of John H. Mundy*, Oxford 1985, 7-35.

<sup>40</sup> Paris 1869.

<sup>41</sup> See JOSEP-IGNASI SARANYANA-ANA DE ZABALLA, «Influencias joaquinistas en la iconografía franciscano-cuzqueña del siglo XVII», in *AFH* 85 (1992) 442-461. "Las dos obras pseudo-joaquinistas, aquí aludidas, son: *Vaticinium Sibillae Erithrae* (1251/4) y *Expositio super Sibillis et Merlino* (1254/6), que son anteriores al 'año joaquinista' de 1260", *ibíd.*, 449.

or to the Orders of the Friars Minor or Friars Preacher. He invokes the authority of a Sibyl of the “time of King Priam and the Trojan War,” which he would likely date to the twelfth century before Christ.<sup>42</sup> The text in question is the prophecy of the Erythrean Sybil, *Vaticinium Sibillae Erythrae*, which claimed to be an extract from a “basilograph,” “a text from the imperial treasury of “Emmanuel Emperor of the Greeks” (Manuel I Comnenus, d. 1180) and composed by the “Babylonian Erythrean Sibyl” at the request of the Greeks engaged in the war with Troy. It further purports to have been translated from its original Chaldean (Syriac) into Greek by a certain Doxapater, and thence into Latin by an “Admiral Eugenius” of the kingdom of Sicily.<sup>43</sup>

The critical edition of these prophecies by Christian Jostmann indicates that the text was likely produced in the early 1240s among members of the papal curia, by an author or authors with strong ties to the Florentine monks, to Franciscans and to Cistercians.<sup>44</sup> A second and longer version of the text, perhaps to be dated to 1249, may have been compiled at the time of the mission of John of Parma, Franciscan Minister General and great admirer of Joachim, to the Byzantine Emperor John II Vatatzes<sup>45</sup>.

### *Erythrean Sibyl*

For those unfamiliar with this prophetic literature, an extended excerpt will give a flavor of these texts which are cited at great length by the author of the *Conformities*. The Sybil is speaking and in her words seems to foretell clearly the coming of Christ, as noted by the glosses on the text:<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> O. HOLDER-EGGER (ed.) *Italienische Prophetieen des 13 Jahrhunderts*, in *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichte*, XV, 155 ff.; Holder-Egger reckoned the prophecy to have been composed between the years 1251-1254.

<sup>43</sup> In HOLDER-EGGER it bears the title: *Hoc liber est extractus de libro qui dicitur Vasilographo, id est imperialis scriptura, quam Sibilla Erithea Babylonica condidit ad petitionem Grecorum tempore Priami regis Troie; quem Vedoxa peritissimus pater in Grecum transtulit de Chaldeo [sermone], tandem de erario Emanuelis imperatoris Grecorum eductum Eugenius regni Sicilie admiratus de Greco transtulit in Latinum* cf. HOLDER-EGGER, *ibid.*, 155.

<sup>44</sup> CHRISTIAN JOSTMANN (ed.) *Sibilla Erithea babilonica: Papsttum und Prophetie im 13. Jahrhundert*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Schriften* 54, Hannover 2006.

<sup>45</sup> JOSTMANN, 18-21, 339-340. See also the useful summary of the dating of the text by SCOTT WELLS in *The Medieval Review*, 07.11.06.

<sup>46</sup> AF, IV, 44.

In the last age God will be humbled and the son of God will be humbled; godhead will be joined with humanity; the lamb will lie on the hay, and God and man will be raised by the help of a maiden. Signs will precede his coming among the Appellae (gloss: i.e. the Jews ); an aged woman (gloss: i.e. Elizabeth) will conceive a child (gloss: i.e. John). The world will wonder at Boetes (gloss: the star); it will give guidance to the birthplace (gloss: i.e. of Christ). When he has thirty-three feet (gloss. i.e. years) and six thumbs (gloss: i.e. months) he will choose for himself from lowly fishermen a group of twelve (that is, twelve apostles), and one devil (gloss: i.e. Judas). Not by the sword or by war shall he subdue the city of Aeneas (gloss: i.e. Rome) and kings, but with the hook of the fisherman; in lowliness and poverty he will overcome wealth and trample upon pride; with his own death he will raise the dead, and when he is slaughtered, he will live and reign. And all things shall come to an end, and there shall be a rebirth; he shall judge the good and the evil. Thereafter four animals (i.e. the four evangelists) shall rise to give witness, they shall sound upon the trumpet the name of the Lamb, disseminating justice and blameless law (gloss: i.e. the Gospel) which the beast (gloss: i.e. the Antichrist) shall oppose together with the abomination of the dragon's spume<sup>47</sup>.

Of all the prophetic texts he cites, Bartholomew would have considered this one the most venerable for its antiquity. And considering its uncanny accuracy in predicting events of the New Testament, he believed that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit must have been at work in the prophesying of this pagan seer. Shortly after this lengthy citation, Bartholomew notes that the same Sibyl also predicts the coming of the Franciscans and Dominicans as opponents of the Antichrist, under the figure of two stars: "And two like stars (gloss: i.e. the Orders of Minors and Preachers) shall be first to rise up against him but shall not prevail until the coming of the accursed thing, and the will of the Most High is fulfilled"<sup>48</sup>.

### *Cyril of Mount Carmel*

Another prophetic text that Bartholomew cites with considerable interest is the *Angelic Oracle* (or *Divine Oracle*) of Cyril of Mount Carmel (or of Constantinople), a text destined to have a long-lasting influence in the

<sup>47</sup> Likely referring to the waters in Rv 12:15 ff.

<sup>48</sup> AF, IV, 44.

West.<sup>49</sup> This Cyril was portrayed as an early 13th-century hermit on Mount Carmel, subsequently figured as an early General of the Carmelites. Cyril received an angelic revelation while he was celebrating Mass. An angel descended from heaven and gave him silver tablets covered with writing in Greek. Cyril transcribed the text and wrote out a Latin version of the Greek writings he had just seen, called the *Angelic Oracle*. No trace of the Greek text ever circulated, and what claims to be its Latin translation is full of unusual words, as if the author had difficulty in rendering Greek into Latin. After the translation was completed, still unable to discern their meaning, Cyril sent the texts to an acknowledged expert for their interpretation: Abbot Joachim at his monastery of Fiore in Calabria. We learn that Joachim agreed and sent to Cyril an interpretation of the Latin translation of the revealed Greek text.

One of the results of modern research on the *Angelic Oracle* has been the identification of its author as a member of the Spirituals' party within the Friars Minor, and not a Carmelite author at all. In fact, it seems that the Franciscan-inspired prophecy created its source, Cyril, out of whole cloth. After being honored later as an important Carmelite writer, and even given a place among the earliest general superiors of the Order, Cyril today is considered a literary fiction, like the text of Joachim interpreting the Oracle. A forgery, therefore, the *Angelic Oracle* invented a new series of glimpses into the future, a future full of Franciscan reforms that could enjoy the reputation of the prophetic approval of the Abbot of Fiore.

### *Cyril's Oraculum Angelicum*

Bartholomew begins by describing the circumstances in which Cyril received his revelations:

Blessed Francis and his Order were also proclaimed by Cyril the priest and anchorite of Mount Carmel, to whom, while celebrating Mass, an angel of the Lord brought two tablets written in Greek, with the instruction that he should write down their contents and translate them into Latin and send

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<sup>49</sup> P. PIUR (ed.) «Oraculum Angelicum Cyrilli», in K. BURDACH (ed.), *Vom Mittelalter zur Reformation*, II, 4, Berlin 1912, 221-343. It has been studied as part of the broader phenomenon of Sibylline texts by SYLVAIN PIRON, «Anciennes sibylles et nouveaux oracles. Remarques sur la diffusion des textes prophétiques en Occident, VIIe-XIVe siècles» in STÉPHANE GIOANNI, BENOÎT GRÉVIN (eds.) *L'antiquité tardive dans les collections médiévales: textes et représentations, VIe-XIVe siècle*, Ecole française de Rome, 2008, 259-302.



them to the Western Church. And he did so. But since the wording of the prophecy is extremely obscure, he sent it for interpretation and elucidation to Joachim, who explained its meaning<sup>50</sup>.

He then goes on to give a key to interpreting the text, identifying the coded language used in the Oracle to refer to Francis and his Order:

I shall therefore cite this prophecy, and at the same time give Joachim's exposition, so that it may be properly and clearly understood. It should be known that he regularly refers to blessed Francis in this prophecy with the word "rock": this is clear at the beginning and in other subsequent chapters, and it is clear at the end when he is speaking of the Lesser Brothers in general, when he says: "Certainly, if [they had looked to] the mighty rock" etc. ; and although Joachim gives a reason for this, I shall append another below.<sup>51</sup>

Besides referring to the Order of Minors, Bartholomew suggests (and his uncertainty is reassuring) that the same prophecy may also concern at least two other Orders:

Second, it should be noted that at the beginning of this prophecy, referring to blessed Francis by the word "rock", he speaks of his Order as "hewn from that rock", and subsequently seems to be speaking of the Order of Preachers and the Order of Carthusians; and he speaks of these three Orders, first of their beginnings, and their origins, of their early, happy circumstances, and finally of their evil plight until he arrives at the section: "Certainly, if [they had looked to] the mighty rock". There he finishes with the other Orders, and commending blessed Francis, and urging the friars to imitate blessed Francis, he concludes his prophecy<sup>52</sup>.

After long excerpts from the *Angelic Oracle*, Bartholomew gives the following summary of the import of Cyril's revelation and its prophetic interpretation by Abbot Joachim:

From this prophecy of Cyril therefore the excellence of blessed Francis is evident: it is evident what his Order was in the beginning, and what it will be in its mid-life and its end as regards its morals; finally it is evident from the revelations made to blessed Francis that the Order of Minors will endure until the Day of Judgment<sup>53</sup>.

Cyril's *Angelic Oracle* and its explanation by Pseudo-Joachim were later disseminated in the work of a certain Telesphorus of Cosenza, *De sta-*

<sup>50</sup> AF, IV, 45.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> AF, IV, 52.

*tu Ecclesiae et de tribulationibus futuris*, “a Fraticelli production of about 1365.”<sup>54</sup> This compilation of prophetic texts, abbreviated by a Dominican, “Brother Rusticiano of Brescia,” was published, along with writings of Joachim and Cyril, as *Liber de magnis tribulationibus in proximo futuris compilatus*.<sup>55</sup> This florilegium contains extracts from authentic writings of Joachim and writings attributed to him, texts of Jean de Roquetaillade, the *Angelic Oracle* of Cyril and other apocalyptic treatises. The *Angelic Oracle* itself, with an interpretation by Philippe de la Très-Sainte Trinité, was published by the Carmelites in 17th-century France to honor its author as an early superior of the Order<sup>56</sup>.

### *Polycarp the Deacon*

The *Book of Conformities* also invokes the prophecies of another author, identified as Polycarp, a deacon, but without further indications of his origins or the time of his writing:

Blessed Francis and his Order were proclaimed, as Abbot Joachim attests in his writings on the eighth chapter of the prophecy of Cyril the anchorite and priest of Mount Carmel, by a certain deacon named Polycarp, who, as Joachim states, had read and said many things about Francis and his Order, though Joachim himself cites very few of his sayings<sup>57</sup>.

The few sayings of Joachim mentioned by Bartholomew place the figure of the mysterious Polycarp within the context of disputes over poverty, a theme characteristic of the Spiritual Franciscans. The text begins with a selection from Cyril’s *Angelic Oracle*: “The fool offers the stick for his own beating, and he who does not take it, is to be judged the more foolish”. There follows the Pseudo-Joachim’s explanation:

[...] the deacon Polycarp says, in the volume he published, that many mendicant Orders will arise out of devotion to apostolic poverty, of which some will be suppressed by the Church

<sup>54</sup> B. MCGINN, «Portraying Antichrist in the Middle Ages», in W. VERBEKE et al. (eds.) *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, Leuven 1988), 24. See EMIL DONCKEL, «Studien über die Prophezeiung des Fr. Telesphorus von Cosenza, OFM (1365-1386)», in *AFH* 26 (1933) 29-104, 282-314.

<sup>55</sup> Venice 1516.

<sup>56</sup> PHILIP OF THE HOLY TRINITY, *Divinum oraculum S. Cyrillo Carmelitae Constantinopolitano solemnii legatione Angeli missum*, Lyon 1663.

<sup>57</sup> AF, IV, 44.

because of their importunity and insolence and the burden they cause almsgivers, and some, the more famous of them, will last for a time, and will meanwhile claim a not inconsiderable position within the Church. And because they will be enriched by many ecclesiastical benefits, the clergy will fear them, and will serve them until they too are suppressed with the others<sup>58</sup>.

No further information is to be found about this personage in Bartholomew's writings or in the earlier texts which he cited.

### *The Abbot of Outremer*

Bartholomew adds a final author to his listing of prophetic figures who foresaw the activities of the life of Francis, an otherwise anonymous abbot. The Latin text identifies this abbot as one who lived *in partibus ultramarinis*, that is, in the Outremer or Crusader states of the Middle East. He foretold the visit of Francis to the Middle East (which the saint visited in 1219-1220) and spoke to his monks about the saint's holiness and that of his brothers. He gave directions to the monks of his monastery (unnamed in the *Conformities*), that if they ever caught sight of Francis or his brothers in their region, they should "go before him with a cross and show him all reverence."<sup>59</sup> The author then informs us that this happened when Francis, accompanied by twelve of his brothers, crossed the Mediterranean to meet the Sultan. Curiously, an account in a Dominican source attributes the prophecy and its fulfillment to St. Dominic. Gérard de Frachet, O.P. (d. 1271) relates the same prophecy in this way in his collection of early *Vitae* of saintly Dominicans: "The Abbot Joachim wrote of this Order of Preachers in many books in many places; and described the Order and its habit, admonishing his own brothers that, after his death, when this Order should arise, they should welcome it devoutly, which they did, when [the Preachers] first came to them, welcoming them with a procession with the cross."<sup>60</sup> Sources available to Bartholomew, the *Chronicle of the Twenty-Four Gen-*

<sup>58</sup> AF, IV, 50.

<sup>59</sup> AF, IV, 56.

<sup>60</sup> *Vitae Fratrum Ordinis Praedicatorum*, in *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica*, Louvain 1896, pars 1 c. 2, p. 13: an English version can be found in BEDE JARRETT (ed.) *Lives of the Brethren of the Order of Preachers 1206-1259*, trans. Placid Conway, London 1955.

*erals* and *Speculum Vitae*, attribute the prophecy to an abbot of the *Black Mountain* in Syria, eight miles from Antioch, where there was a famous abbey of “monks of St. Benedict” who became Friars Minor<sup>61</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

Prophetic and oracular texts from a variety of authors, some authentic and some pseudonymous, helped Bartholomew of Pisa to make his case for the conformity of St. Francis to Christ in the *Book of Conformities*. Current research shows that many of these texts were clever forgeries, composed quite close in time to the work of the Pisan author. A large proportion of these writings were inspired by the writings of Joachim of Fiore, modified, interpreted and re-invented by Franciscan authors, particularly from the dissidents among the Spirituals. Among its other points of interest for the student of things Franciscan, the *Conformities* is significant for its collection of many prophetic texts that were applied, in a thoroughly orthodox context, to the figure of the Poverello of Assisi. It is to be hoped that continuing study of the work of Bartholomew of Pisa will shed further light on the interpretation of the figure of Francis and the Franciscan Order in the later Middle Ages.

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<sup>61</sup> Texts given in G. GOLUBOVICH, OFM, *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente Francese*, I, Quaracchi 1906, 68.

