

**THE ORIGINS AND THE ANTECEDENTS OF JOACHIM OF
FIORE'S (1135–1202) HISTORICAL-CONTINUOUS
METHOD OF PROPHETIC INTERPRETATION**

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Problem

In an age of biblical idealism dominated by allegorical hermeneutics, the works of Joachim of Fiore (1135–1202) created a shift in biblical exegesis, directly impacting the development of both Catholic and Protestant eschatology. Although a manifest interest has been expressed concerning the influence of Joachim of Fiore on the eschatology of the late Middle Ages, very few scholars have attempted to explore the antecedents of Joachim's ideas, specifically his historical interpretation of Daniel and Revelation and the application of the year-day principle. The purpose of this study is to explore the origins of Joachim's eschatological views and to suggest the sources or literary traditions that might have influenced him in developing a systematically unique historical scheme for interpreting the book of Revelation.

Methodology

This dissertation attempts to highlight and evaluate similarities between Joachim's apocalyptic thought and major medieval and Early Church eschatological sources. This is achieved through two major steps. The first step is to accurately depict Joachim's method of prophetic interpretation. The second step is to systematically compare Joachim's method of interpretation with the sources antecedent and contemporary to Joachim. Included is an analysis and evaluation of commentaries on Revelation from the Latin, Byzantine, and Near-Eastern Christian sources, as well as an examination of sources from the medieval Jewish tradition.

Results

The analysis of the eschatological commentaries antecedent to Joachim of Fiore reveals that, besides a number of unique features, Joachim's hermeneutical framework primarily combines: (1) the historical periodization of Church history characteristic of the expositors in the Latin High Middle Ages, in the early Byzantine period, and Near-Eastern Christian exegesis; (2) Latin medieval tradition of Revelation exegesis dominated by the recapitulation principle; and (3) a Near-Eastern Christian (Armenian, Syrian, and Coptic) and Jewish system of prophetic interpretation using the "year-day" principle, coupled with the expectation of the future Sabbatical period, sometimes referred to as the millennium.

Conclusions

Joachim's system of interpretation does not have a direct antecedent, but instead has several sources. The historicist method of biblical interpretation, although rare in the early Latin Middle Ages, appears to revive in the High Middle Ages. Historicism was a particularly prominent approach to the book of Revelation in the Byzantine and Near-Eastern Christian traditions. Potentially surprising are several similarities between Joachim and Near-Eastern Christian expositors. This seems to be a neglected area in the field of Joachite studies, as very few contemporary scholars have linked Joachim's historicist ideas with the Near-Eastern exegesis of the book of Revelation.