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The spiritual side of Samuel Richardson

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Introduction

Between 1740 and 1754 Samuel Richardson, a busy and successful printer in London, wrote three novels which were to have a major impact on European literature. Possibly as a result of the prevalent tendency of feminist¹ and Freudian critics to secularize eighteenth-century texts and to deny any spiritual meaning to them, Richardson has most often been accused of having an obsession with sex, which has led, in the second half of the twentieth century to an avalanche of Freudian criticism, beyond the scope of this study. It will suffice to refer to a succinct summary of the main Freudian readings up to 1971 as found in the impressive biography of Richardson by Eaves and Kimpel.² Later Freudian criticism is more or less a repetition of what had been said before, as is evident from Keymer's discussion of Pierre Choderlos de Laclos's *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782), in which certain critics who perceive a link between Richardson and Laclos argue that letters are a tool in the hands of manipulative writers so as to control the manipulated reader, rather than an exploration of the soul.³ Equally revealing is Keymer's examination of certain critics who hold that the moralist Richardson is no more than a pervert.⁴ Such links and interpretations were rarely made in early criticism.

It is my objective, therefore, to carry out an investigation into English religious and philosophical thought during the first half of the eighteenth century focussing on Richardson, on his second novel *Clarissa* but especially on his third and last novel *Sir Charles Grandison*, which he considered to be his *magnum opus*. As we progress it will become clear how the mystically inclined George Cheyne, a Newtonian physician and Behmenist, was the link

¹ Though feminist criticism acquired a distinct identity in the late 1960s and 1970s with the publication of various works, I will only mention *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in which references to Richardson are especially to be found on pp. 317-318, 321 and 620.

² Duncan T.C. Eaves, Ben D. Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson: A Biography*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 257-264, 519, 601. Some of the more important earlier critics who resorted to a Freudian reading are Ian Watt, Dorothy Van Ghent, A.D. McKillop, Leslie Fiedler, V.S. Pritchett, Morris Golden, Frederick C. Green, Mario Praz. Well-known are the views of S.T. Coleridge ("His mind is so very vile, so oozy, so hypocritical, praise-mad, canting, envious, concupiscent", p. 1) and D.H. Lawrence ("Richardson's calico purity and his underclothing excitement", p. 519).

³ Tom Keymer, *Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 17-19, 35, 158-168.

⁴ Keymer writes: "For Sade ... Richardson could be reconstructed at the century's end as an essentially amoral philosopher of evil, fascinated by human nature in all its darkest possibilities." (Keymer, *Op. cit.*, p. 152; also pp. 151-157). In "Representing Clementina: Unnatural Romance and the Ending of *Sir Charles Grandison*" Albert Rivero argues that the bleeding scene in *Sir Charles Grandison* is a maimed rite, a dark romantic scene hinting unspeakable sexual transactions. (Albert J. Rivero, *New Essays on Samuel Richardson*, London, 1996, p. 221).

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between certain seventeenth-century ideas as expressed by Boehme, the Quakers, Fénelon, Poiret, and those found in William Law's works, especially after 1735, as well as in Richardson's last two novels. Cheyne's works clearly show that certain Enlightenment objectives were mixed with the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century counter-movement of mystical or radical Pietism with its emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men. This led to a confrontation between the defenders of Light and the defenders of Enlightenment.

In Germany a decisive moment in the development of the Pietist movement was the publication in 1675 of P.J. Spener's *Pia Desideria*, a set of six proposals for restoring true religion.⁵ Halle was the centre of the movement for some years, but in the eighteenth century Pietism took on different aspects.⁶ Among these stands out the system at Herrnhut, in the settlement of Spener's godson, Count von Zinzendorf, the founder of the Herrnhuter "Brüdergemeine" or Moravian Brethren. The Moravian system was important, not only because it affected many similar movements, such as John Wesley's Methodism, but also because, as we shall see, it influenced Samuel Richardson.

I will discuss the "spiritual"⁷ Samuel Richardson and show that ultimately Richardson's goal was to convey a message of love and universal harmony deduced from the ideas of Cheyne and Law, as well as directly and indirectly from the theosophical system of Jacob Boehme, who deeply influenced the radical pietist movement especially. In both *Clarissa* and in *Sir Charles Grandison* we see the influence of "theosophy", denoting knowledge of divine things. Theosophy was revived in the seventeenth century in both Latin and vernacular forms to denote the kind of speculation based on intuitive knowledge, which is found in the Jewish Kabbalah. Hostility to Kabbalah greatly increased in the eighteenth and later centuries. The term "theosophy" is often applied to the system of Boehme, the "Teutonic Philosopher". Gershom Scholem defines theosophy as a mystical doctrine purporting to perceive and describe the workings of God:

⁵ As a result the word "Pietist", as a nickname, came into use. Pietism became a movement within Protestantism which concentrated on the "practice of piety", rooted in inner experience and expressing itself in a life of religious commitment.

⁶ Roughly we can distinguish between mainstream Lutheran and Reformed Pietism and radical Pietism. The latter, with its emphasis on the inner or inward Light, was heir to the mystical tradition. Within the circle of radical Pietism we sometimes find millenarian expectations, and more or less unorthodox doctrines.

⁷ The adjective "spiritual" is used here to refer to Richardson's subjective practice and experience of his religion. The word *spiritualitas* first appeared in the fifth century. It refers to the quality of life which should result from the spiritual gifts (according to Paul: "the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good", 1 Cor. 12:7), imparted to all who believe in Christ. Some of the spiritual gifts listed at 1 Cor. 12:8-10 are of a more extraordinary character and include healing and prophecy, but, according to Paul, charity is the greatest of all the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 13:13). From the twelfth century onwards a narrowing of the word *spiritualitas* and of related expressions such as "spiritual life" occurred. "Spiritual life" came to be regarded as more or less identical with interior religion. Meditation and mysticism (a loving union with God or an experiential knowledge of God) are considered to be major factors in spirituality.

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By the term I mean that which was generally meant before the term became a label for modern pseudo-religion, i.e. theosophy signifies a mystical doctrine, or school of thought, which purports to perceive and describe the mysterious workings of the Divinity. Theosophy postulates a kind of divine emanation whereby God abandoning his self-contained repose, awakens to mysterious life. Theosophists in this sense were Jacob Boehme and William Blake.⁸

Boehme's theosophy was called Behmenism in England. Among the first to give an outline of the spread of Behmenism in England during the seventeenth century was R.M. Jones, who pointed at the relation between the Quakers and Boehme.⁹ The chief representative of English Behmenism in the eighteenth century was William Law, who had been introduced to Boehme's work by George Cheyne.

Though *Pamela* is not really relevant to my discussion of the spiritual side of Richardson, we find that his second and third novel have a great deal to offer in this respect. I will show how *Clarissa* can be viewed as a transition towards *Sir Charles Grandison*, Richardson's third and last novel, in which he expressed his vision of love and harmony most clearly and explicitly. I will explore *Sir Charles Grandison* in some detail in the last chapter of this study.

A Tripartite Division of Richardson's Novels

We can trace the organic growth of Richardson's spiritual thought by interpreting his three novels, *Pamela*, *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison* anagogically, representing three stages, or ages: the First Age of the Father (Old Testament or Law), the Second Age of the Son (New Testament or Grace), and the Third Age of the Holy Spirit (Love). The latter Age was to prepare for the end of world history, the second coming of Christ and the millennium, beyond world history. This division of world history in three stages, where each "age" is dominated by a powerful force or figure, had been developed by the twelfth-century mystic Joachim of Fiore.¹⁰ Joachim's vision continued to captivate the

⁸ Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York, 1941, p. 206. Theosophy is found in the works of the sixth-century Christian Neoplatonist and mystical theologian Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. The aim of his works was the union of the whole created order with God. In the *Mystical Theology* he describes the ascent of the soul to union with God, a union which is the final stage of a process of purification, illumination and perfection. Several medieval mystics such as Meister Eckhart and John Tauler were deeply influenced by these works.

⁹ R.M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th & 17th Centuries*, London, 1914. Margaret Lewis Bailey tried to show Boehme's influence on Milton in *Milton and Jakob Boehme: A Study of German Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century England*, 1914. A detailed description of the historical development of the Behmenists and the Philadelphians was made by Nils Thune in *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians: A Contribution to the Study of English Mysticism in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Uppsala, 1948. Like Jones had done earlier, Thune also discusses the confusion between Behmenists and Quakers in the eyes of contemporary writers and he compares the visions of Fox and Boehme (see Thune, *Op. cit.*, pp. 64 ff.).

¹⁰ For various valuable studies of Fiore, see Marjorie Reeves and Beatrice Hirsch-Reisch, *The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore*, Oxford, 1972. In *Joachim of Fiore in Christian Thought: Essays on the Influence of the Calabrian Prophet*, 2 vols., New York, 1975, Delno C. West states that there is lit-

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imagination of many people throughout the later Medieval and Renaissance period. Boehme's dream of "peacefully reconciling order with freedom"¹¹ is expressed in his vision of the *Lilienzeit* or the Age of the Holy Spirit, resembling Fiore's Age of the Holy Spirit to which Fiore also referred as the Age of the Lily.¹²

We recognize the stern moralist in Richardson's first novel, *Pamela*, in which Pamela's virtue is rewarded by marriage, a reward on earth and in the flesh. Her abidance with the "Law" (especially the one which says "Thou shalt not ...") may be compared to Fiore's Age of the Father. In *Clarissa* Richardson describes the clash between authority (external authority: the power or right to persuade individuals or groups to obey precepts or recommendations) and conscience (inner authority: knowledge within oneself, associated in the New Testament with faith and the Holy Spirit). Richardson expresses this dilemma of serving two masters by a process of suffering in which Clarissa ultimately achieves illumination (no cross, no crown), reminiscent of the Age of the Son. Then, finally, in *Sir Charles Grandison* we find Richardson's vision of love and harmony, the Age of the Holy Spirit, which is the outcome of the illumination achieved in *Clarissa*.

Sir Charles Grandison is therefore not a description of the millennium or an earthly (very English) paradise, as has been suggested by Jocelyn Harris,¹³ although it may very well be connected with John's Book of Revelation, in

tle doubt that elements of Joachite thought infiltrated the Lollards in England and the Brethren of the Free Spirit in the Netherlands. In "Joachim of Flora: A Critical Survey of his Canon, Teachings, Sources, Biography, and Influence" M.W. Bloomfield argues that Wyclif was well aware of Joachim and of Joachite speculation in general, and that he refers to the Abbot Joachim more than once (p. 82). Bloomfield further mentions Nicholas of Cusa as having been influenced by Joachim (p. 83) (cf. Delno C. West, *Op. cit.*, 1975, pp. 29-92). Marjorie Reeves's *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, London, 1976, contains a detailed account of Fiore's influence on Protestants, pp. 136-165. See also M.W. Bloomfield, "Recent Scholarship on Joachim of Fiore and his Influence", in *Prophecy and Millenarianism: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Reeves*, Essex, 1980, and Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore: A Study in Spiritual Perception and History*, Bloomington, 1983. Marjorie Reeves, "The Development of Apocalyptic Thought: Medieval Attitudes", in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, Manchester, 1984; Marjorie Reeves and Warwick Gould, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, 1987.

¹¹ Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic*, New York, 1991, pp. 20, 56, 95.

¹² In Christian art the lily, especially the white or madonna lily (*Lilium candidum*) is an emblem of chastity, innocence and purity. Fiore's third age would be the Age of the Spirit (with its symbol of the lily) to be lived in the liberty of the "Spiritualis Intellectus" (the miraculous gift of spiritual understanding, cf. *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, 1987, p. 7). Reeves argues that, although he never alluded to him, Jacob Boehme was the most likely candidate to have been influenced by Joachim of Fiore. Carl Jung discovered Joachim of Fiore as a psychological phenomenon placing him in the context of "an epoch noted for its spiritual instability" when "everyone felt the rushing wind of the pneuma". He saw Fiore as "one of the most powerful and influential voices to announce the coming new age of the spirit", or third aeon (cf. Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, London, 1976, pp. 173-174). Jung discovered one of Joachim's Trees in the Zurich Central Library.

¹³ Jocelyn Harris, *Samuel Richardson*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 1-2. Harris wrote that Richardson's words that "he always gave that Preference to the Principles of LIBERTY, which we hope will for

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which John sees the Lamb open the seven seals of the scroll. The opening of the seventh seal in particular brings destruction and death on earth and its inhabitants. Only a small remnant of 144,000 sealed with the name of the Father and of the Lamb on their foreheads, are to be saved and gathered in the harvest of the earth (Rev. 7:3; 14:1). I will argue in chapter 7 that Sir Charles, aided by the Holy Spirit, can be seen gathering the truly pious out of all denominations.

Richardson's Origins

To discover the key to Richardson's labyrinth it is necessary to go into the past, into Richardson's origins. Richardson has been considered as practically uneducated and without contact with the formative tradition of European culture. Looking for literary sources, Eaves and Kimpel sum up their views of Richardson's education as follows:

Richardson, unlike Fielding, was not a learned or even well-read man. The influences which have been sought out for Richardson are remarkable largely because they are so distant and so minor. [He] was more a product of the *Zeitgeist* than of literary influences.¹⁴

And Marijke Rudnik-Smalbraak writes:

Richardson was not ... a man of great erudition. As a consequence of his profession he was constantly dealing with manuscripts of authors, with booksellers and books, yet he never belonged to the more professionally established literati of his age. His printing press was not primarily literary. The knowledge that he did acquire during the fifty years preceding his actual writing life was of a general sort; it was what a moderately curious individual, in temperament

ever be the distinguishing Characteristic of a Briton", specifically referred to the "traditional hope of seventeenth-century revolutionaries that England would be relieved of the Norman yoke and restored to its ancient Anglo-Saxon birthright of liberty." This, Harris continues, "suggests that Richardson was not untouched by the millenarian dreams that his father must have known." Harris writes that Richardson's own work expresses millenarian hopes: "First *Pamela* sketches the overthrow of wickedness and the return to a prelapsarian state; then *Clarissa* shows goodness confronting avarice, Anti-Christ, hierarchy, and clerical privilege, and finally *Grandison* presents a carefully worked out vision of millennial love, justice and reform."

¹⁴ Eaves and Kimpel, *Op. cit.*, p. 117. In the foreword to the *Selected Mystical Writings of William Law*, Aldous Huxley writes that the world in its concrete reality is complex and multitudinous almost to infinity. To understand it, we generalize, we omit "what we choose at the moment to regard as irrelevant and to reduce such diversity as still remains to some form of homogeneity. What we understand is our own arbitrary simplification of that reality ... at the price of neglecting qualities, values and the unique individual case. [Thus] we achieve a limited but, for certain purposes, extremely useful understanding of the world. In the same way the historian achieves his much more limited and questionable understanding of man's past and present by selecting, more or less arbitrarily, from the chaotic mass of recorded facts precisely those which exhibit a kind of homogeneity that happens to appeal to a man of his particular time, temperament and upbringing. This homogeneity is then generalized as a principle, or even hypostatized as a *Zeitgeist*, i.e. personified as the Spirit of the Age. Such facts as do not suffer themselves to be

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both diligent and didactic, would have absorbed from his surroundings, almost imperceptibly.¹⁵

She continues to say that, contrary to Fielding, Richardson lacked an expensive education (i.e. non-university trained), as a result of which his real school was life “as he lived it and as it was lived by those around him”, adding that many present-day readers perceive Richardson as “the fellow whom Fielding mocked”.

It is true that Richardson was not too fond of the literary products of his age. Yet, even though, as Eaves and Kimpel pointed out, Richardson may indeed have disliked some of the writers of his age, he was also a great admirer of Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, as well as Chaucer, to name but a few, as appears from his letter to Aaron Hill of January 19, 1743/4:

I have bought Mr. Pope over so often, and his Dunciad so lately before his last new-vampt one, that I am tir'd of the extravagance; and wonder every Body else is not. Especially, as now by this, he confesses that his Abuse of his first hero, was for Abuse-sake, having no better Object for his Abuse. I admire Mr. Pope's Genius, and his Versification: But forgive me, Sir, to say, I am scandaliz'd for human Nature, and such Talents, sunk so low. Has he no Invention, Sir, to be better employ'd about? No Talents for worthier Subjects? - Must all be personal Satire, or *Imitation of others Temples of Fame*, Alexander's Feasts, Coopers Hills, MacFlecknoe's? (Italics are mine)¹⁶

Richardson printed Chaucer's “Prologue” and Dryden's version of the “Knight's Tale” for Thomas Morrell, and he discussed with his friend Thomas Edwards plans for a new edition of Chaucer.¹⁷

Moreover, his mind was amazingly receptive receiving numerous impressions other than literary which can be traced in his novels. Richardson considered the age in which he lived as spiritually dead, and though he recognized the genius of authors such as Swift and Pope, and perhaps even of Fielding, he did not like their morality. In a letter to Cheyne, dated 21 January 1742/43, Richardson refers to Quarles and Bunyan as writers of morality and piety which clearly shows Richardson's ethical preference, all too easily dismissed by modern critics.¹⁸ Richardson rather turned to other than literary works and it is these works which reveal the spiritual side of his nature. Not

explained in this way are either explained away as exceptional, anomalous, and *irrelevant, or else completely ignored.*” (Italics are mine) I will prove that Richardson was not a product of the *Zeitgeist*, by showing the influence of certain “exceptional” people on him, an influence which has been dismissed as “irrelevant or else completely ignored” by most critics.

¹⁵ Marijke Rudnik-Smalbraak, *Samuel Richardson: Minute Particulars within the Large Design*, Leiden, 1983, p. 90.

¹⁶ John Carroll, *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, Oxford, 1964, p. 60.

¹⁷ William Merrit Sale Jr., *Master Printer*, Ithaca, 1950, pp. 125, 224. Eaves and Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson: A Biography*, Oxford, 1971, p. 330.

¹⁸ John Carroll, *Op. cit.*, p. 57.

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at all, or only briefly, discussed in the books dealing with Richardson or his novels, these will become the subject of this study.

In his *Selected Bibliography: Samuel Richardson (1689-1761)* of April 2000 Richardson scholar John Dussinger states that Eaves and Kimpel's biography of Richardson of 1971 is still "the definitive biography", and that William M. Sale Jr.'s *Samuel Richardson: Master Printer* is "requisite reading".¹⁹ I find Eaves and Kimpel's remarks about Richardson's possible sources interesting:

Sources have ... been suggested for Richardson's method. Parallels between his piety and that of the Quaker journals²⁰ and the Puritan conduct books have been noted, but parallels are not sources: Richardson's piety need not have been learned from any book; it was the general property of his class. We do not deny that he has much in common with this *unread literature*. On the other hand, what Richardson shares with it is *least interesting* in him. For a social historian, *contemporary platitudes* are undoubtedly revealing. For us, a work of literature is generally impressive not for what it has in common with its age ... but for what it says that no one else has said in the same way, for what it does not share with everyone else. (Italics are mine)²¹

It is in William M. Sale's *Samuel Richardson: Master Printer* that we find proof that Richardson was indeed much better acquainted with this so called "unread literature" than Eaves and Kimpel as well as other Richardson critics may have been aware of.

As a master printer, Samuel Richardson was already a successful London tradesman when he published his first novel *Pamela* in 1740-41. A list of the books he printed can help us better to understand Richardson's character as well as his fiction. Because almost all the records of Richardson's career have disappeared, Sale compiled a list of more than five hundred books that came from his press, identified by the presence of Richardson's ornaments. From the very beginning Richardson exercised choice over the books, and, genuinely pious and free from scepticism and immorality, they clearly reflect his interests and his preferences. It is through these books that we are able to disprove statements such as the one made by John A. Dussinger that *Clarissa* is the pro-

¹⁹ Cf. <http://www.c18.rutgers.edu/biblio/richardson.html>. Dussinger informs us that a new bibliography of Richardson's printing career by Keith Maslen is soon to appear.

²⁰ Eaves and Kimpel probably refer to the remarks by Brian W. Downs about the possible influence of Quaker writing on Richardson. Downs notes that "the published journal came into fashion about the same time as the published letter, the *Journals* of Fox, Penn ... appearing in 1694." He mentions Miss Danielowski who had shown how the spiritual self-analyses of the early Quakers developed a regular literary form and had remarked on the close resemblance between this literary form and the one Richardson chose for *Pamela*. (Cf. Brian W. Downs, *Richardson*, (1928), London, repr. 1969, p. 162). Downs also mentions the growth of Pietism and Quakerism among the Protestants, and refers to "phenomena such as Madame Guyon's Quietism on the Roman side" on p. 172.

²¹ Eaves and Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson: A Biography*, Oxford, 1971, p. 117.

totype of feminine chastity in the Puritan tradition.²² When he refers to William Law, Dussinger concludes that, besides popular devotional manuals and sermons of the seventeenth-century divines, William Law's earlier writings *A Serious Call* and *Christian Perfection*, appeared "especially pertinent" to Richardson's tragic view. It is clear that Dussinger never recognized the influence of Law's mystical writings.

Interpretative Chaos after 1971

Later criticism has generally adopted Dussinger's point of view. In *Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character* Cynthia Griffin Wolff discusses what she considers Richardson's "Puritan" indebtedness.²³ At one point she states that worldly ambition has replaced religious fanaticism in the life of the Puritan-turned-merchant.²⁴ Even so, she says, we can never single out a given Puritan work, and only through close textual examination can we prove Richardson's direct or indirect indebtedness.²⁵ She concludes that *Pamela* adopts one standard Puritan solution to the problem of worldly morality in that it equates earthly reward with divine reward. Griffin Wolff believes that *Clarissa* offers a second alternative, also from the Puritan tradition, whereby earthly values are transcended, with the individual defining himself purely in terms of a community of Saints. Finally, as to *Grandison* she argues that most of Richardson's "new ethic" bears "unmistakable resemblances to Latitudinarian sentiments", adding that Richardson admired the Latitudinarian divines.²⁶

In *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson* Margaret Ann Doody also argues that Latitudinarian influences contributed to *Sir Charles Grandison*.²⁷ Doody believes that Richardson adopted a strict Pelagian morality in *Sir Charles Grandison*, and adds that Sir Charles imitates the Latitudinarian deity who rewards merit with love, and withdraws as soon as merit lapses.²⁸ Carol Houlihan Flynn states that *Clarissa*'s perfectionism is a softened version of the Puritan progression towards sainthood which comes out of the Latitudinarian tradition.²⁹ Purified through her sufferings "like gold in a crucible", *Clarissa* emerges as a saint in the mystic tradition. Her progress, argues Flynn, recalls the spiritual journeys of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross.³⁰ In *Sir Charles Grandison* Flynn recognizes a classic saint's

²² John A. Dussinger, "Conscience and the Pattern of Christian Perfection in *Clarissa*", *PMLA*, 81 (1966), 236-245.

²³ Cynthia Griffin Wolff, *Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character*, Massachusetts, 1972.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 179, 180.

²⁷ Margaret Ann Doody, *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson*, Oxford, 1974, p. 12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

²⁹ Carol Houlihan Flynn, *Samuel Richardson, A Man of Letters*, Princeton, 1982, p. 26.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

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life, but she compares him with “a corpse walking among his admiring mourners”.³¹ This criticism recalls Hippolyte Taine who in 1899 summed up Sir Charles as follows:

He is great, he is generous, he is refined, he is pious, he is irreproachable; he has never done a mean action nor made a false gesture. His conscience and his peruke are intact. Amen. We must canonize him and stuff him [Il faut le canoniser et l'empailler].³²

Mary V. Yates interprets Sir Charles as the Christian rake, who reflects his libertine predecessors as often as his saintly ones, and she argues that Grandison is Lovelace resurrected as a good Christian.³³

Tom Keymer's *Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader* appeared in 1992.³⁴ Though he mainly discusses *Clarissa*, he refers to seventeenth-century millenarianism in relation to Jocelyn Harris's remarks on *Sir Charles Grandison*:

Regeneracy rather than mere stabilisation becomes the primary impulse of Richardson's writing until, in *Grandison*, he ends by delineating (in Jocelyn Harris's words) a “vision of millennial love, justice and reform”. If this work's lessons were truly learned, wrote one early reader, “how would this world be changed, from a sink of corruption, into a paradisaisall [sic] state, our lost Eden be restored again to us.”³⁵ Less fanciful contemporaries recognised Richardson's writing as in this sense political interventions, attempts to buttress and repair the “polity” itself.³⁶

From this I conclude that between 1987 and 1992 no additional research was done about the influence, if any, of millenarianism on Samuel Richardson. Keymer further discusses the problem of interpretation and the inevitable interference by different experiences, mentalities, predispositions and idiosyncrasies, which, he believes, can easily drift towards “unlicensed invention”. He especially seems to disagree with the post-structuralists' “free play”.³⁷ Keymer discusses a tripartite division of Richardson's oeuvre and suggests that this would do much to explain Richardson's idea that his novels “complete one plan”:

³¹ Ibid., p. 46.

³² Cf. Eaves and Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson: A Biography*, Oxford, 1971, p. 400. Their source is the *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, Paris, 1899, IV, 120.

³³ Mary V. Yates, “The Christian Rake in *Sir Charles Grandison*”, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 24 (1984), 545-561, p. 552.

³⁴ Tom Keymer, *Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader*, Cambridge, 1992.

³⁵ Thomas Newcomb to Richardson (late October 1754), FM XV, 4, ff. 39-40.

³⁶ Tom Keymer, *Op. cit.*, pp. 68, 149-150.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 71-73.

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Pamela addressing the major cases inherent in the relative duties of masters and servants, *Pamela II* doing the same for husbands and wives, *Clarissa* for parents and children, and *Grandison* for almost anyone (but emphasizing the classic case of marriage between Protestant and Catholic, to which Defoe had devoted much of *Religious Courtship*). Such an account would do much to explain Richardson's idea that the novels "complete one plan".³⁸

In 1996 *New Essays on Samuel Richardson* appeared.³⁹ It contains Jerry C. Beasley's essay "Richardson's Girls: The Daughters of Patriarchy in *Pamela*, *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*" in which Beasley argues that *Sir Charles Grandison* is a powerful argument on behalf of a traditional model of patriarchy, even more so than *Clarissa*.⁴⁰ In the same collection of essays we find John Allen Stevenson's "Alien Spirits: The Unity of Lovelace and Clarissa", which recognizes that it is difficult to understand Lovelace and Clarissa's attitudes and emotions if we approach the novel from the Puritan point of view that many readers have employed or from the more generalized Christian viewpoint that, according to Stevenson, Richardson himself claimed to represent.⁴¹ Stevenson is even "tempted" to call Richardson a Catholic malgré lui.⁴² He believes that Clarissa and Lovelace share a contempt for the world and that their dualism, their sense of alienation, their emphasis on a higher knowledge, characterized the great rivals of the early Christian Church, who were, in Stevenson's words, "collectively called Gnostics".⁴³ However, Stevenson immediately claims that there was no influence here, as there was with Blake, because Richardson was "a good Church of England man", and no secret adherent of these "ancient heresies".

Lois A. Chaber's essay "*Sir Charles Grandison* and the Human Prospect" is interesting because it discusses "compromises" as an inevitable part of Grandison's universe. Chaber concludes that Sir Charles's own estate is a "version of the Augustan Compromise" between pleasure and profit and that the wide spectrum of concessionary arrangements arbitrated by Sir Charles is tainted by its lowest common denominator: an appeal to sordid gain.⁴⁴ She believes the reader is entrapped by the illusory utopia of Grandison Hall, only to face disillusionment and a lowering of expectations in volume VII. She argues that, according to Jocelyn Harris by the end of his story Sir Charles has returned to the restored world of the millennium, an ideal world that has achieved "paradisaal harmony", a view which Chaber obviously does not share.⁴⁵ Chaber suggests on the other hand that Richardson is deliberately

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 95-96.

³⁹ Albert J. Rivero, *New Essays on Samuel Richardson*, London, 1996.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 45.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 92.

⁴² Ibid., p. 92.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 93.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 200-201.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 193-194.

invoking the pastoral “Golden Age retreat” convention of the contemporary popular novel as a set-up, a trap, to question and modify expectations of perfect happiness and ideal harmony in the human condition. Summing up the above criticism we find that Richardson has been classified as a Puritan, a Latitudinarian, a millenarian, a Catholic malgré lui, a good Church of England man, or as someone showing signs of a gnostic spirit.

Richardson’s Ideas

But who was Richardson really? Without trying to pigeonhole him all over again, we should try to find out which persons and ideas really influenced him. But first I will explain why I will not use the term “Puritan” to classify Richardson. The word “Puritan” never had a single precise meaning and in the senses of the post-1559 period it ceased to be applicable after the Restoration in 1660. Kristen Poole discusses the term “Puritan” as an ambiguous label that did not signify any specific group of people. She refers to numerous scholars who have provided surveys of historical and historiographical uses of the term and mentions Patrick Collinson’s important remark that “no laboratory-bench taxonomy of religious types and tendencies ... will serve if it sticks labels on isolated and inert specimens and fails to appreciate that the very terms themselves are evidence of an unstable and dynamic situation.” Poole refers to Peter Lake who argued that contemporaries assigned the label of “Puritan” based on a degree of zeal rather than on theological differences. She explains that the term “Puritan” rather signalled religious separatism and when not applied to religious separatism, “Puritan” signalled nonconformist practices.⁴⁶

Initially, Puritans were the more extreme English Protestants who were dissatisfied with the Elizabethan Settlement and sought a further purification of the Church from supposedly unscriptural and corrupt forms along the Genevan model.⁴⁷ Queen Elizabeth had aimed at a compromise: a middle road between the parties which divided the kingdom, a golden or leaden mediocrity depending on which side of the fence one stood. Richardson himself disliked the word Puritan and in *Sir Charles Grandison* has Harriet comment on it as follows:

Am I a prude, [Charlotte]? In the odious sense of the abused word, I am sure, I am not: But in the best sense, as derived from *prudence*, and used in opposition to a word that denotes a worse character, I own myself one of those who would wish to restore it to its natural respectable signification, for the sake of virtue; which ... is in danger of suffering by the abuse of it; as Religion once

⁴⁶ Kristen Poole, *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England*, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 188-190. Cf. Patrick Collinson, “A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan”, in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31 (1980), 488.

⁴⁷ Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation*, (1964), London, 1990, p. 131.

did, by that of the word *Puritan*. (VI. 101)⁴⁸

The adjective “Puritan” was first used in the 1560s as a term of abuse, meaning precise, over-strict, over-severe, and failing to make allowances.⁴⁹ Owen Chadwick correctly states that there is more than one view on what is too severe and the courtiers of Charles II needed little severity or strictness to justify calling anyone who disagreed with them a Puritan. On the whole the Reformation age was earnestly moral. Referring to the Spaniards of the Counter-Reformation, the Lutherans, Catholics and Protestants, predestinarian or Arminian, Johann Arndt, William Laud or Jeremy Taylor, Chadwick tells us that the tone was reforming and often strict and therefore one could describe the moral ideals of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation as Puritan, if removed from its special use to condemn the hypocrite, the canting and the bizarre.

It will become clear during the course of this study that any classification of Richardson is difficult. Like the men who influenced him more than anyone else, such as his contemporaries George Cheyne, William Law and Zinzendorf, Richardson was himself interested in and concerned with the religious divisions in Europe in the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries, especially with religious tolerance and harmony. In this respect Richardson’s first novel *Pamela* is less interesting, as it is rather concerned with the here and now. The place where Pamela will be rewarded for all her “suffering” is here on earth, in England or, more specifically, at Brandon Hall. However, in *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison* freedom of conscience and tolerance play a much more important role. For although on the literal level *Clarissa* is about a young girl of eighteen whose fall ultimately becomes her ticket to heaven, on the anagogical or mystical level it represents her quest for the freedom of conscience, or the right to choose. And especially in *Sir Charles Grandison* we see Grandison’s efforts to achieve the goals set out in *Clarissa* of freedom of conscience, toleration and world harmony.

It is interesting to know that the Dutch translator of *Clarissa* was the distinguished Mennonite preacher, Johannes Stinstra, who between 1739 and 1749 also translated Samuel Clarke’s sermons.⁵⁰ Upon receiving a letter from Stinstra dated 14 September 1752, Richardson had William Duncombe find out more about him.⁵¹ Pleading for liberty of conscience, belief and religion, Stinstra had published five sermons in May 1741 which led to an attack on him as a champion of Socinianism and ultimately, in 1742, to his being suspended from the ministry.⁵² This gave him sufficient leisure to translate *Clarissa*,

⁴⁸ *Sir Charles Grandison*, ed. Jocelyn Harris, Oxford, 1972. All further references in the text will be to this edition.

⁴⁹ Owen Chadwick, *Op. cit.*, pp. 175-176.

⁵⁰ Joris van Eijnatten, *Mutua Christianorum Tolerantia*, Florence, 1998, p. 87.

⁵¹ Eaves and Kimpel, *Op. cit.*, p. 321.

⁵² See for an analysis of the Stinstra-affair: Joris van Eijnatten, *Op. cit.*

which was to be published in eight volumes between 1752-55, although he later admitted in his letter to Richardson of December 24, 1753, that the translation was “a burden too heavy for my shoulders”.⁵³ In 1750 Stinstra wrote *Waarschuwinge tegen de geestdrijverij vervat in een brief aan de doopsgezinden in Friesland (Pastoral Letter against Enthusiasm)*, a tract published by Folkert van der Plaats (*Clarissa*’s publisher) and Isaac Tirion. Tirion was a well-known Mennonite publisher in Amsterdam, who was interested in translating *Sir Charles Grandison*, an important subject in the correspondence between Richardson and Stinstra.⁵⁴ Henry Rimius translated the *Pastoral Letter* into English in 1753.⁵⁵ In this 81-page pamphlet Stinstra argued that reason is an absolute necessity in religion and that an unreasonable religion is really no religion. He believed that the free play of the imagination and passions could lead to madness, but concluded that “the mad people now more deserve our pity, compassion, and sympathy than our hatred, bias, and persecution”.⁵⁶

Apparently pleased with the information obtained by Duncombe, Richardson and Stinstra embarked upon a correspondence which would last till 1756. In his first letter to Stinstra, Richardson writes:

A learned and worthy Friend thus writes to me on the Subject - You will judge on reading the Extracts from his letters, why I trouble you with them. “I find, that your Monsieur Stinstra is the same Gentleman as wrote ye Pastoral Letter against Fanaticism. It is supposed, that the Book being originally published in Dutch, is the Occasion of its not being known here. He has published also in Dutch Five Sermons for Liberty of Conscience, and Toleration, and against all Imposition of Human Authority. By his clear manner of Writing, I make no doubt but this is an excellent Work. I am one of his Admirers, and think he

⁵³ For a discussion of Richardson’s reputation in the Netherlands and especially on the novelists Elizabeth (Betje) Bekker Wolff and the (Mennonite) Agatha (Aagje) Deken, who followed Richardson’s method to some extent, see William C. Slattery’s *The Correspondence Between Samuel Richardson and Johannes Stinstra, the Dutch Translator of Clarissa*, Arkansas, 1962, pp. 213-226. See also *From Martyr to Muppy: A Historical Introduction to Cultural Assimilation Processes of a Religious Minority in the Netherlands: The Mennonites*, (eds. Alastair Hamilton, Sjouke Voolstra, Piet Visser, Amsterdam, 1994, p. 82). In de “Voorrede van de schrijfters voor den eersten druk” van de *Historie van mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart* (1782) Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken wrote: “Eindlyk staan er Geniën op, die hun verächt Vaderland wreken; Engeland heeft haar Pope, Duitschland zyn Wieland. Richardson schildert eene Godlyke ‘Clarissa’; Klopstok zingt zyne ‘Messiade’ en het lezent Europa erkent, dat alle *gematigde* Luchtstreken grote mannen kunnen voortbrengen.”

⁵⁴ William Slattery, *The Richardson-Stinstra Correspondence and Stinstra’s Preface to Clarissa*, Illinois, 1969, footnote 31, p. 217. Van der Plaats and Tirion later had a falling out, which caused the delay in the publication of *Sir Charles Grandison*, see letters of August 11 and September 11, 1753. Tirion published translations of several works of English theologians such as Philip Doddridge, as well as Isaac Newton’s interpretation of the Apocalypse (cf. Joris van Eijnatten, *Op. cit.*, footnote 36, p. 98). For the connection between Doddridge and Tirion, see J. van den Berg, and G.F. Nuttall, *Philip Doddridge (1701-1757) and the Netherlands*, Leiden, 1987.

⁵⁵ Joris van Eijnatten, *Op. cit.*, p. 87. Cf. Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England, 1728-60*, Oxford, 1998, pp. 273, 275-277.

⁵⁶ William Slattery, *Op. cit.*, pp. 213-214.

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deserves a Place with Locke, &c.”⁵⁷

Returning to the discussion of the labels stuck on Richardson, we have seen that he has also been called a Latitudinarian, a term opprobriously applied in the seventeenth century to describe certain anti-dogmatic Anglican divines some of whom were among the Cambridge Platonists, such as Henry More. Latitudinarianism gained strength in the early part of the eighteenth century, emphasizing practical Christian living, morality and a distrust of every kind of enthusiasm. Cragg informs us that many of the representatives of the Latitudinarians had been taught by the Cambridge Platonists, but that they were different from them in their complete absence of any mystical strain and also by a far less imaginative approach to the life of faith.⁵⁸ It may have been due to Cragg’s description of the Latitudinarians as reasonable, dispassionate, and charitable men, whose virtues, however, easily degenerated while their good-will subsided into mere complacency, that whenever Richardson’s critics apply the term Latitudinarian to Richardson it always seems to have a slightly negative connotation. For a more modern discussion of the term see B.M. Young’s *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke*.⁵⁹ Young refers to Spurr’s “Latitudinarianism and the Restoration Church” in which Spurr discusses “Latitudinarianism” in some detail and concludes that it is a “stigmatizing nickname”, an “abusive insinuation of a readiness to enlarge one’s conscience to suit personal ends”, which will never be pinned down, because of the confusing meanings and connotations. Those who had received the sobriquet were indeed trying to slough off calvinism, but rather saw themselves as impartial, free, moderate, rational and new.⁶⁰ Whether as a reaction to so-called Latitudinarianism or as a development of it, we find that Evangelicalism emerged in the later part of the eighteenth century.

Richardson’s novels appealed to the Evangelicals, who unlike the Methodists, remained within the Church of England. They were devoted to good works. Aided by the Quakers, they helped to abolish the slave trade. Zachary Macaulay, William Wilberforce and Hannah More were among the original Evangelicals who admired Richardson.⁶¹ In *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1808) Hannah More considers Richardson’s virtuous characters as portrayals of the triumph of religion and reason over the passions.⁶² Eaves and Kimpel tell us that:

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁸ Gerard R. Cragg, *The Age of Reason 1648-1789*, (1960), London, 1990, pp. 70-72.

⁵⁹ B.W. Young’s *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke*, Oxford, 1998, p. 11.

⁶⁰ J. Spurr, “Latitudinarianism and the Restoration Church”, in *The Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), 61-82.

⁶¹ Gerard R. Cragg, *Op. cit.*, pp. 154-156.

⁶² Richard G. Hannaford, *An Annotated Bibliography of Critical Studies*, New York, 1980, p. 88.

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For a long time Richardson's morals were an important reason for his popularity [which] could be demonstrated from many sources, but Macaulay will suffice. He praises Richardson for raising 'the fame of English genius in foreign countries', for originality, for pathos, for 'profound knowledge of the human heart', and concludes by praising his moral tendency, citing two morally unimpeachable witnesses: 'My dear and honored friend, Mr. Wilberforce, in his celebrated religious treatise, when speaking of the unchristian tendency of the fashionable novels of the eighteenth century, distinctly excepts Richardson from the censure. Another excellent person whom I can never mention without respect and kindness, Mrs. Hannah More, often declared in conversation, and has declared in one of her published poems, that she first learned from the writings of Richardson those principles of piety by which her life was guided.'⁶³

Richardson's ideas as they were expressed through his novels appealed also to certain Pietist circles in Germany. We know from Lawrence Marsden Price's "On the Reception of Richardson in Germany"⁶⁴ that the first German translation of *Clarissa* was published in 1748 and began to appear in Göttingen in the same year. The translator of the first four volumes was Johann David Michaelis (1717-1791), a Lutheran theologian and Orientalist, as well as professor at Göttingen from 1746 to his death. He was to have a far reaching influence on the development of biblical criticism. He was also the annotator of Robert Lowth, William Warburton's greatest opponent, which points towards a dialectic between Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment tendencies.⁶⁵ The identity of the translator of volumes V to VIII is not known. In a letter dated 2 April 1753 Stinstra writes to Richardson "That your *Clarissa* has been translated by a Göttingen professor named Michaelis you undoubtedly know."⁶⁶

Since Stinstra clearly was an admirer of Michaelis as can be testified by the many books written by that author in Stinstra's possession,⁶⁷ we can accept his reference to Michaelis as an authoritative statement. The driving force behind the translation was Albrecht von Haller, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Göttingen. An early admirer of Richardson, Von Haller was a

⁶³ Eaves and Kimpel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 588-589.

⁶⁴ Lawrence Marsden Price, "On the Reception of Richardson in Germany", in *Journal of English and German Philology*, XXV (1926), 7-33.

⁶⁵ B.W. Young, *Op. cit.* p. 214; J.C. O'Flaherty, "J.C. Michaelis: Rational Biblicist", in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 49 (1950), 172-181; J.C. O'Neill, *The Bible's Authority*, 1991, pp. 28-38.

⁶⁶ William Slattery, *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁶⁷ Cf. Johannes Stinstra, *Catalogus Bibliothecae insignem Praestantissimorum atque Optimae Notae Librorum ad Paratum Complexae, quos collegit vir Doctissimus et Plurimum Reverendus Joannes Stinstra, dum viveret, Ecclesiae Teleiobaptistarum Harlingae, per longam Annorum, Van der Plaats and Dion, Romar, Harlingen and Franeker, 1790*. For instance nrs. 321 etc., nrs. 894 etc., nrs. 1205, 2175, 2350, 2556. Contemporary appreciation of Michaelis may be testified as well by the fact that William Bowyer was involved in the publication of several of Michaelis's works. Bowyer

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Swiss physiologist and the author of philosophical romances. In the 1750s and 60s Richardson enjoyed the unqualified support of such literary leaders as von Haller and Lessing.⁶⁸

Sir Charles Grandison was most probably translated by Johann Mattheson in 1754-55,⁶⁹ although it appears from the correspondence between Richardson and the Leipzig bookseller, Erasmus Reich, that Christian Fürchtegott Gellert was involved in supervising and sponsoring the work.⁷⁰ McKillop tells us that *Grandison* was more favourably received in Germany than in England or France. Gellert's lines "Unsterblich ist Homer, unsterblicher bei Christen/Der Britte, RICHARDSON" together with Gellert's letter on reading *Grandison*, give us the equivalent of Diderot's *Éloge*, to which McKillop adds that Gellert is more fully representative of Germany than Diderot is of France.

Lessing was especially impressed by *Sir Charles Grandison* and put it on the same level with *Clarissa*. Goethe was also influenced by Richardson. Evidence of this is to be found in his *Werther*, and in *Wilhelm Meister* Goethe specifically names *Pamela*, *Clarissa* and *Grandison*. However, he was not uncritical in his praise, and, according to Price, *Grandison* soon became for Goethe practically synonymous with "Schwärmerei". Nevertheless, it seems that in the 1770s Richardson was still in high favour in Germany.⁷¹

Summarizing the above we find that Richardson did not seek his friends among the leading writers of his time, because he felt that they misapplied their genius. It is essential for a better appreciation of Richardson to find out with whom he did find his friends and acquaintances whose influence stimulated him to write his three novels by which he depicted the evolutionary growth towards his own distinctive and powerful vision of a new world.

In order to achieve my objective I will discuss in the first chapter Richardson's printing career with special attention to those works which reveal his spiritual side. Chapters 2 and 3 will explore the relationship between Richardson and Cheyne, which extended over a period of about nine years, from 1734 to 1743, when Cheyne died. The aim of these chapters is to show similarities between Cheyne and Richardson's psychological make-up and to point at instances where Cheyne may have exerted an influence on

printed in 1763 an edition of the Greek Testament in two volumes to which he added *Conjectural Emendations*, selected from various authors one of whom was Michaelis. In 1773 Bowyer translated and published *Select Discourses from Michaelis, on the Hebrew Months, Sabbatical Years, &c.* (cf. the *Dictionary of National Biography* on William Bowyer, the younger or "the learned printer", pp. 84-85).

⁶⁸ Lawrence Marsden Price, *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁶⁹ Johann Mattheson is described as "nicht nur der bedeutendste Kritiker, Ästhetiker, Polemiker, Enzyklopädist der deutschen Musikgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts, sondern auch ein anerkannter Sänger und Komponist, ein beachteter Autor juristischer und staatswissenschaftlicher Schriften und - endlich - auch ein fleissiger Übersetzer meist englischer Autoren (Defoe, Richardson u.a.).

⁷⁰ Alan Dugald. McKillop, *Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist*, Chapel Hill, 1936, pp. 253-259.

⁷¹ Lawrence Marsden Price, *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

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Richardson. I will put Richardson in an international context, showing his acquaintance with the works of the French Protestant theologian Pierre Poiret, who spent the largest part of his life in Holland and who influenced the whole Pietistic movement, and the Swiss Henry Wetstein, publisher in Amsterdam of Poiret, Boehme, Bourignon, Guyon and other mystics. Richardson's familiarity with the *Theologia Germanica* will also be discussed as well as his interest in the East.

The fourth chapter will examine the relationship between Richardson and Law, while chapter 5 will be concerned with the direct influence of Boehme on Richardson. Chapter 6 will trace Richardson's millenarian ideas, concentrating on Richardson's own vision or utopian dream of the preparations for a better world in *Sir Charles Grandison*.

Finally, we will see in the last chapter how Richardson conveyed his own Utopian dream in *Sir Charles Grandison*, expressing his belief that the "truly pious" can be found in all Christian denominations. He even went further and suggested that the truly pious can be found beyond Christianity, which is quite an extraordinary idea for an "ordinary" printer of the first half of the eighteenth century.