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The spiritual side of Samuel Richardson

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Richardson's Millenarian Ideas

An important question which we have to ask ourselves is whether Richardson was depicting in *Sir Charles Grandison* a vision of millennial love, justice and reform as suggested by Jocelyn Harris.⁴⁷⁸ She writes that Richardson's words that he "always gave that Preference to the Principles of LIBERTY, which we hope will for ever be the distinguishing Characteristic of a Briton", specifically refer 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." Suggesting that Richardson was not untouched by the millenarian dreams that his father must have known, Harris adds that Richardson's own work expressed millenarian hopes. For Harris sees *Pamela* as the overthrow of wickedness and the return to a prelapsarian state, and *Clarissa* as goodness confronting avarice, Anti-Christ, hierarchy, and clerical privilege, while she interprets *Sir Charles Grandison* as a vision of millennial love, justice and reform. Harris seems to relate the millennial vision in *Sir Charles Grandison* specifically to those revolutionaries who in the seventeenth century wanted to restore England to its "ancient Anglo-Saxon birthright of liberty", a view with which I do not agree.

However, if *Sir Charles Grandison* should indeed represent a vision of millennial love, does that make Richardson a millenarian? To answer that question, we must first define "millenarian". In its proper sense, a millenarian is someone who believes that the thousand years of Christ's eschatological reign (Rev. 20:2-7) is near. To avoid any confusion it is necessary to elaborate a little, for the concept of the millennium (and the related one concerned with the kingdom of God)⁴⁷⁹ is complex, and it has not only been taken literally but has also often been spiritualized.

According to the Book of Revelation, chapter 20, Satan is imprisoned in the bottomless pit for a thousand-year period while the Christian martyrs are raised to live and reign with Christ. After this period Satan will be briefly released. Then there will be a general judgment followed by a "new heaven and earth" (Rev. 21:1). There are different views concerning this thousand-year period. The post-millennialists maintain that the millenium occurs before the Parousia (the Second Coming), and that indeed the millennium prepares the

⁴⁷⁸ Jocelyn Harris, *Samuel Richardson*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁷⁹ "The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever", Rev. 11:15, "the kingdom of our God", Rev. 12:10.

way for it by the spread of righteousness over the earth, while the pre-millennialists believe that the millennium will follow the Parousia. The latter argue that first Christ will return to judge the living and the dead in a final General Judgment,⁴⁸⁰ after which the present world order will end. Then the millennium will follow. They are not sure, however, whether this thousand-year period will be spent by the saints in heaven or upon earth.⁴⁸¹

Much more important for our discussion is the amillennial viewpoint, which interprets Rev. 20 symbolically rather than literally. According to the amillennial point of view, the Christians who have come to life and reign are those who experience the new birth of faith in Christ and who feel the activity of his kingdom now. They interpret "one thousand" metaphorically, not literally. This is the view Cheyne adhered to as expressed in his letter to Richardson of 30 June 1742.⁴⁸² Cheyne had experienced the transition or rebirth (regeneration) of the old man into the new man, and, consequently, felt the kingdom of God within. For Cheyne the kingdom of God was not directly related with the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth as a political reality. Richardson may have shared this view, for Cheyne writes in the same letter that he was not afraid Richardson would misinterpret his "Insinuations" and adds: "[you] have always shown a Relish for Spiritual and internal Religion."

But now let us turn to the literal interpretation of the millennium. Wiles argues that forecasts of the coming of the millennium on the basis of scriptural prophecies were a common feature of the first half of the eighteenth century, and not necessarily a mark of eccentricity. He refers to Newton who made many calculations of the time of the millennium, placing it, however, much later, even to the twenty-first century.⁴⁸³ Wiles describes the ambivalent attitude of for instance Edward Young who wrote in a letter of 6 April 1746:

The famous Mr Whiston called on me, who prophesied severe things to this poor nation; he pretended to support himself by scripture authority; how just his pretence is I cannot absolutely say, but I think there are so many public symptoms on the side of his prophecy as to hinder it from being quite ridiculous.⁴⁸⁴

In the same year Whiston was said to have read out a paper at a public meeting in Tunbridge which concluded:

⁴⁸⁰ The General Judgment, or the Last Judgement, is held to be God's final sentence on mankind as a whole, as well as His verdict on both the soul and the body of each individual, in contrast with the Particular Judgment on souls immediately after death.

⁴⁸¹ Because millenarianism more and more stressed the carnal pleasures to be enjoyed during the thousand-year reign of the saints on earth, it was Origen who in the third century decided to put a stop to it, a process finally completed by St Augustine in the fifth century.

⁴⁸² See pp. 42 and 43 above.

⁴⁸³ Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries*, Oxford, 1996, p. 109.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

If I be right in my calculation as to our Blessed Saviour's coming to restore the Jews and begin the Millennium twenty years hence, I cannot but conclude that after those twenty years are over, there will be no more an infidel in Christendom, and no more a gaming-table in Tunbridge.⁴⁸⁵

This concurs with Richardson's meeting with Whiston in Tunbridge two years later.⁴⁸⁶ According to Richardson, "this extraordinary old man", now an Anabaptist, was still preaching the millennium in 1748.

To ascertain Richardson's millenarian ideas, it could help if we tried to examine Cheyne's views on this subject, who, as we have seen, had been labeled by some critics as a millenarian. But was he indeed? Or are Cheyne's millenarian ideas more complex? In the *Philosophical Principles* Cheyne discusses the origin of the "present State of Things". He is surprized to find that people frequently wrangle about the origin of their families, whereas hardly anybody ever seriously wonders how the whole race at first came to be: "whether it sprang from the *Earth* or dropped from the *Clouds*".⁴⁸⁷

Cheyne does not believe that the universe and all it contains is "from all *Eternity* of itself".⁴⁸⁸ He argues that when a thing depends upon another thing as its cause, this implies that the first thing exists that the second may exist: remove the sun and there will be no fruit, take away the moon and the seas would stagnate, destroy our atmosphere and we would "swell like poison'd Rats".⁴⁸⁹ Cheyne is also convinced that the quantity of water on earth is daily "impaired and diminished" and that the light of the sun is daily decreasing as the body of the sun is growing cooler and he suggests that the "Specks and Clouds on the Face of the *Sun*" are perhaps vapours which fume away.⁴⁹⁰ He writes:

Far be it from me from suggesting the least Hint towards lessening or depreciating the infinite Wisdom, Beauty and *Harmony*, undeniably appearing in all the Works of GOD: All I would insinuate is, that there seems to appear *Vestiges* of some Alterations in the Constitution and Frame of the Universe, (at least of that Part of it which principally respects the Human Race) from its primitive Lustre and Beauty, and that *Paradisaical* state wherein our Holy Religion informs us it was originally constituted. The Scripture Account of the Nature of glorify'd Bodies, and of the *Paradise of the Faithful*, as also, of the Labour and Groans of the whole Creation under its present State, accounts for what one who soberly and attentively looks into the natural Pravity of his own Heart, or into the present (in some small Degree) Gloominess, Perplexedness,

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 109.

⁴⁸⁶ See p. 28 above.

⁴⁸⁷ *Philosophical Principles*, Part I, p. 111.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., Chapter IV, pp. 142 ff.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 145-146.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 152.

and Distortion of our *System*, cannot help to observe. All which seems evidently to hint to us, that the present Constitution neither has lasted, nor is to last for ever.⁴⁹¹

Moreover, Cheyne argues that, if the world had been from all eternity as it now is, the arts and sciences would have advanced to a much higher level and greater perfection than they are now. As an example Cheyne mentions mathematics and its improvement over the previous two hundred years compared to all the time before that. He suggests that two or three hundred years more may carry them to a height which he could not now imagine. If the world had been from all eternity, "this Science" would by now have been perfect.⁴⁹²

In the *Essay on Regimen* Cheyne pursues the subject further and writes that, according to him, and contrary to George Rousseau's statement,⁴⁹³ he did not believe that the millennium (that thousand-year-period of blessedness on earth) had begun. On the contrary, Cheyne perceived the earth ("this defaced and spoilt Planet") rather as a jail for a certain period of time, like Siberia, the Bastille or the Plantations. And he wrote that our whole creation labours like slaves at the oar, "is in *Travail*", working for a "*Crise and Delivery*". He believed that some individuals might be delivered sooner, some later, "according as their Expiation and Purification is perfected". But he was convinced that, at last, the "whole *System*, and all its Inhabitants, must naturally and necessarily, but *harmoniously or anagogically*," undergo some great and violent crisis and a "universal *Gaol-Delivery*". As to how and when this would be accomplished, Cheyne could not tell, for "*a Thousand Years are but as a Day here*, and the Ways of the *Almighty* are past finding out".⁴⁹⁴

Yet Cheyne uses the words "universal Gaol-Delivery" which may point at the Parousia, the last Judgment and a future millennium. Later Cheyne writes again that there is no paradise on earth. He is certain that such "a Place as *Paradise*" is now "no-where to be found on it", adding that it could perhaps be on some other planet.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 162-163.

⁴⁹² Ibid., p. 170.

⁴⁹³ George Rousseau claims that in 1709 or 1710 Cheyne "believed that the millennium had begun" and "that recent political and social events were sufficient proof, and that [Cheyne] bore a special mission in its commencement." (Cf. "Mysticism and Millenarianism: 'Immortal Dr. Cheyne'", in *Millenarianism and Messianism in English Literature and Thought 1650-1800*, Leiden, 1988, p. 98). See also footnote 203 above.

⁴⁹⁴ *Philosophical Principles*, Part I, p. 27.

⁴⁹⁵ In the *Essay on Regimen* Cheyne conjectures that our earth, the moon and the other planets in our system with their satellites, could be "Bettering-houses", according to the "Dutch" manner of speaking. They could be prisons, dungeons and places of punishment for trial, expiation or progressive purification of the several sorts and degrees of "lapsed intelligent Beings", though not meant for eternal duration. He is sure that the planets are most certainly not "Pleasure-Houses", nor paradises or happy mansions for perfect and glorified "Intelligences". Perhaps this concept of "Bettering-houses" reflects Cheyne's understanding of *apocatastasis* or the "universal restoration" of all free moral creatures. (*Essay on Regimen*, 1740, pp. 105-106, 220).

*Balancing the Inconveniences with the Advantages, of want of Light and Sun, and of cold, uncertain and various Seasons, of Barrenness, and Mountains cover'd with Ice and Snow, of the one Part, with the Hurricanes, Tempests, Volcano's, Earthquakes, Thunder and Lightning, poisonous Insects, and ravenous and savage Beasts, scorching Heats, and pestilential Winds, Blasts or Damps, of the other, the whole Globe is pretty near equal in Conveniences; and no particular Place without its Comforts and Inconveniences. So that either Paradise was on some other Planet, or (which is most natural to suppose) Crime, Rebellion and Disorder have had a physical and necessary Influence, on the Matter or Vehicle belonging to each human Spirit.*⁴⁹⁶

We may safely conclude that in 1740 Cheyne did not believe that the millennium, that thousand-year period of blessedness, had arrived on earth.

Discussing the future political state, the "New Jerusalem", as it appears in the Book of Revelation, Cheyne points at the "Elect".⁴⁹⁷ According to Cheyne the "Elect" seems to imply "the *Officers and Governors* of this *new Jerusalem*, this *political* future State, this universal *Restoration*"⁴⁹⁸ *Monarchy* of the *Father of all*." Cheyne further explains that the duration of this "present *probatory* State of the *System of Saturn*" seems confined and limited in the Book of Revelation, to the "Number of the *Elect's* being accomplished" or to the "Time when all the necessary *Officers, Governors* or *Magistrates* of this *new* universal Government is formed, finished and accomplished". And only then will be the "End, *Crisis* and *Period* of this *probatory* State".⁴⁹⁹

Cheyne's conjectures about the New Jerusalem may have influenced Richardson to write *Sir Charles Grandison*, in which we find Sir Charles explaining that "The Church of God ... will be collected from the sincerely pious of all communions" (V. 616). The "sincerely pious of all communions" may represent Cheyne's "Elect". In allegorical usage collecting or harvesting represents the end of the age, as we find it depicted in the Book of Revelation:

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him

⁴⁹⁶ *Essay on Regimen*, p. 144. On pp. 221-222 Cheyne writes: "It is highly reasonable and *philosophical* to suppose, that our whole *System* was design'd by our *Creator* to last in its present Situation, only so long as was requir'd for the *Probation, Purification* and *Expiation* of lapsed *Sentient* and *intelligent* Beings, which both *Revelation* and *Philosophy* shew cannot be an *infinite Duration*; but that the whole *planetary System*, within the *Orbit* of *Saturn*, is progressively and by *general Laws* verging towards some grand *Catastrophe* and *Jail-Deliverance*."

⁴⁹⁷ According to Calvin certain persons are elected by God without relation to faith or works. For Arminius, however, election was God's choice of those who believe and persevere by grace in faith and works. According to Schleiermacher, whose parents were Herrnhuters, election included all humanity, but he believed that on earth only certain men and women are elect.

⁴⁹⁸ See p. 115 above.

⁴⁹⁹ *Essay on Regimen*, p. 222. Cheyne added that "the *Comets* cannot be the Seats of the Bless'd, ... seeing their *Orbits* are so *excentric* to the *Sun*, the *Foci* of their *Ellipses* so vastly distant ... and consequently they probably are the *Prisons, Condemn'd-Holes* and *Dungeons* of *God's Kingdom*, and universal *Monarchy*."

that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. (Rev. 14:15)

I will return to this subject in chapter 7.

George Garden's Interpretation of the Millennium

Cheyne's friends equally struggled with the concepts of the millennium and the elect. In a letter of George Garden to James Cunningham, dated 10 March 1710/11, in which Garden tried to dissuade Cunningham from becoming a follower of the French Prophets,⁵⁰⁰ Garden writes as follows:

Since you have the same esteem that you had formerly for the writings of A.B. [Antoinette Bourignon] you may easily perceive that [your arguments for the Prophets are] not conclusive, there being nothing in which she is more peremptory (and I think not without reason) than that God will send none as *prophets and ambassadors in this last age of the world*, but such as are *regenerated into his spirit*, as have the gifts and fruits of the same, and the qualities of *true charity*, and are partakers of the Divine nature in *righteousness, goodness and truth*.⁵⁰¹ (Italics are mine)

Cheyne's speculations about the "Elect" are reminiscent of Bourignon's "prophets and ambassadors", sent in "this last age of the world". Bourignon's prophets and ambassadors are to be "regenerated" into God's spirit.

Like Cheyne, Garden uses the words "charity" as well as "righteousness, goodness and truth" to describe those "regenerated". Garden's warnings against the French Prophets were quite explicit, for he writes "beware of the false prophets of the last days, and [do] not go after them".⁵⁰² He wants to be a follower of Christ only:

Let us labour to be the true followers of J. Christ, in the spirit of penitence, self-denial, humility and charity without respect to any party, and live in the midst of partys [sic] without being of a party. We are call'd to be the followers of our Lord J. Christ, and not either of Luther or Calvin or A.B. or J.B. or the prophets. This is one true shepherd who calls us to one sheepfold. Let us hear his voice and follow him. In so far as any of our fellow creatures do excite us to this by word or deed, they are to be regarded by us: but in so far as they lead

⁵⁰⁰ The movement of the French Prophets had created interest, but also alarm in the circle. After investigation Garden, Forbes, Keith and Ramsay all became hostile to it, cf. G.D. Henderson, *Mystics of the North-East, Including I. Letters of James Keith, M.D., and Others to Lord Deskford; II. Correspondence between Dr. George Garden and James Cunningham*, Aberdeen, 1934, p. 197.

⁵⁰¹ Henderson, *Op. cit.*, p. 262. The correspondence between Dr. George Garden and James Cunningham as well as an introduction on the French Prophets in Scotland are on pp. 191-262. It is interesting mainly because of the connection between Cunningham and Cheyne, who was Cunningham's physician.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 219.

us to espouse their party's we have need to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. We have one great enemy and that is self, and if that were subdued, nothing could hurt us. May we deny our selves and take up the cross and follow Jesus. By this let it be known that we are the Disciples of Jesus that we love one another.⁵⁰³

James Cunningham was one of Cheyne's patients in Bath, in whom he confided, for Cunningham wrote to Garden in a letter from about 1710/11 that there were things he "never told any mortal of it but Dr. Cheyne".⁵⁰⁴ In the same letter Cunningham refers to Garden's remark, reminiscent of Fiore, about the three different periods of reigns of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, which Cunningham finds confusing. Cunningham writes regarding the passage about the Son's judging and reigning that he does not understand the mysterious speculation about the different periods of reigns of the Three Persons, which Garden had cited. He agrees that it is plain from 1 Cor. 15:27 that it is the Father, who puts all things under the foot of the Son and adds that this also appears in Heb. 2:8 where it is said that we do see not all things put under him. From all of this and what he had read in the Book of Revelation, it seemed to him that the reign of the Son would not begin until what is "call'd the Millenium [sic]", but he feels that, "either way it makes little either for or against the present Appearance".⁵⁰⁵

Garden's reaction to Cunningham's letter is important, because it shows Garden's views about a future millennium. He writes in answer to Cunningham that as to the speculation of the different periods of the reign of the three persons of the Trinity, he had no clear thoughts about them. And as for the millennium, Garden writes, perhaps there is no such thing. He refers to an unidentified Mr. J., who could tell Cunningham that Jacob Boehme had "no opening about it" and did not believe in a sudden approach of it.⁵⁰⁶ Then Garden asks Cunningham whether he had heard the famous story of Mr. Mason, a Minister of the Church of England "in our days", who was a man of great piety and devotion, and firmly persuaded "by Divine inspiration" that Jesus Christ was to come upon the earth within a very short time, in "half a year or so". Upon this Mr. Mason gathered a number of believers who left everything and lived for some time in tents with him, "to attend our Lord's Coming". But Garden tells Cunningham that since the period was short, "the mistake was soon laid open".⁵⁰⁷

Cunningham's answer to Garden is interesting in this context, for he

⁵⁰³ Ibid., p. 220.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 203.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 206.

⁵⁰⁶ See for instance Boehme's *Epistles* in which he wrote: "For the time is come [born], of which it was told me ... by a vision, namely, *OF REFORMATION*. The end [event or time when it shall come to pass] I commit to God; I know it *not yet perfectly*." (*Epistles*, 34:29)

⁵⁰⁷ Henderson, *Op. cit.*, p. 218.

refers to Boehme's time of the Lily and the opening of the seven seals in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 6:12):

Many obscure and mysterious places of the Holy Write [sic] are also thereby explained and we see from thence an easy way how many dark prophecies of the Scriptures should come to be accomplished, and also those of other inspired writers; as what J.B. speaks of the time and the Lilly [sic] and the Enochian Life and spirit of prophecy to be restored immediately before the sixth period.⁵⁰⁸

This last letter was addressed to George Garden "at Roseheart", where he lived at the time in semi-monastic retirement.

Law's Millenarian Ideas

Indications of millenarian tendencies in Law became apparent upon the earthquake in Britain of 1750 which, he thought, was an instance of God's anger. It was thought that a recurrence would obliterate London.⁵⁰⁹ Law used the earthquake as a reason to stress the need for repentance.⁵¹⁰ He did indeed expect the end of the world, but he rejected "scripture arithmetic" to calculate the time, believing that "signs" would indicate the event.⁵¹¹ Just like Boehme a century earlier, Law was convinced that a new day was dawning and that the formation of new sects testified to the unhappiness many people felt with the established Churches, although he expressed his love for all Christians and maintained that he, though still a member of the Church of England, was neither Catholic nor Protestant.

From the above we may conclude that none of the men and women

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 232.

⁵⁰⁹ A. Keith Walker, *William Law: His Life and Thought*, London, 1973, p. 184.

⁵¹⁰ In 1756 Law's friend Peter Peckard (1718-1797) wrote a dissertation on Revelation 11:13 ("And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven") in which he tried to show that there was some reason to believe the prophecy contained in this chapter to have been completed by the great earthquake in Lisbon on 1 November 1755 (All Saints' Day). The dissertation was printed by Richardson. In his letter to Richardson, Peckard wrote that when he showed the sheets to his friend William Law, the latter insisted that he should print them. Peckard added: "I fancy you may make this a twelvepenny affair." Richardson was convinced "of the necessity of publishing soon the Dissertation", but he suggested that Peckard should reconsider his remarks about Bolingbroke and Hume, (whom he had advised to "hang himself"), even though Richardson himself thought both men "very mischievous writers", despising the one and very much disliking the other. (See Barbauld, *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, Volume V, London, 1804, pp. 105-112). In 1756 Richardson also printed Peckard's *Observations on the doctrine of an intermediate state between death and resurrection*, which was the subject of a letter from Peckard to Richardson dated 14 May 1756 (cf. Barbauld, *Op. cit.*, pp. 113-114). (For this and other works, see Sale, *Op. cit.*, pp. 192-193). Peckard was considered heterodox upon the question concerning an intermediate state of conscious existence between death and resurrection and ultimately had to modify his views to some extent which made a bishop say that "Peter Peckard [had] escaped out of Lollard's tower with the loss of his tail."

⁵¹¹ A. Keith Walker, *Op. cit.*, p. 222.

referred to believed that the millennium had actually arrived. Moreover, they did not seem to expect a sudden approach, but were rather more interested in Fiore's or Boehme's Age of the Holy Spirit: a period of peace and righteousness with tolerance and freedom of conscience, preceding the millennium.

Fiore's Millenarianism

During the Middle Ages Joachim of Fiore was the chief exponent of chiliastic ideas. His visions continued to captivate the imagination of many throughout the later medieval and Renaissance period. I will briefly explore Fiore's concept of the three reigns.⁵¹² Joachim's central doctrine is a Trinitarian conception of the whole of history, viewed in three great periods (*status*). The first was the Age of the Father in which mankind lived under the Law until the end of the Old Testament dispensation. The second is that of the Son, lived under Grace and covering the New Testament dispensation. The third is the Age of the Spirit (its symbol is the lily, similar to Boehme's *Lilienzeit*), to be lived in the liberty of the "Spiritualis Intellectus" (the miraculous gift of spiritual understanding) proceeding from the Old and New Testaments.⁵¹³

In 1183 Joachim began his great trilogy in which he further developed the world-week chronology of the seven ages (*etates*) corresponding to the seven days of creation, already worked out by Augustine, with five before the Incarnation, the sixth from the Incarnation to Augustine's own time, and the seventh, the Sabbath Age of rest and beatitude in the future, as yet undefined but certainly beyond world history. Joachim's addition to the Augustinian view was his envisioning the Sabbath Age within history, perceiving it as a new world order: a New Age of guidance by the Holy Spirit acting through a new order of meditative or spiritual men. The Holy Spirit would complete the teachings of Christ and unlock God's last revelation before the end of time. This New Age would be followed by the Second Advent and a period of peace and tranquility, beyond world history.⁵¹⁴

The New Age of guidance by the Holy Spirit would see the rise of new religious orders to convert the whole world and to usher in the Ecclesia Spiritualis. Joachim believed that this age had not yet arrived and he explains:

⁵¹² Valuable research on Fiore has been done by Marjorie Reeves and others, see the Introduction of this study, footnote 10.

⁵¹³ Marjorie Reeves and Warwick Gould, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, 1987, p. 7.

⁵¹⁴ In the first book of the trilogy, the *Liber Concordie novi ac veteris Testamenti* (Harmony of the New and Old Testaments), Joachim tried to point out the correspondence of each person, event and period between the Old and the New Testament. In the second book, the *Expositio in Apocalypsim* (Exposition of Apocalypse), he summarized his ideas about the three ages, the seven seals, and the concord between the two Testaments and he goes into great detail to explain the symbols, visions and figures of the Apocalypse. In the third, the *Psalterium decem chordarum* (Psaltery of Ten Strings), he explained how the ten-stringed psaltery or lyre represented the Trinity, or his three historical stages. The body of the instrument represents the Father, the psalms sung with the aid of the instrument represent the Son and the melody produced by both represents the Holy Spirit. He would spend the rest of his life refining these ideas.

The first epoch was that in which we were under the law, the second when we were under grace, the third when we will live in anticipation of even richer grace. The first epoch was in knowledge, the second in the authority of wisdom, the third in the perfection of understanding. The first in the chains of the slave, the second in the service of a son, the third in freedom. The first in fear, the second in faith, the third in love. The first in starlight, the second in moonlight, the third in full daylight. The first in winter, the second in spring, the third in summer. The first the seedling of a plant, the second roses, the third lilies.⁵¹⁵

Though Joachim believed that the New Age would be ushered in somewhere in the thirteenth century, he never tried to "tie God to any exact timetable: ... cuius terminus erit in arbitrio Dei."⁵¹⁶ He summarized his vision in the *Liber Concordie* as follows:

The third [status] will be the age of the Holy Spirit, of whom the apostle said: Where there is the Spirit of the Lord, there is liberty.⁵¹⁷

The New Age of the Holy Spirit is reminiscent of Richardson's vision described in *Sir Charles Grandison*. Fiore's expectations concerning history had a far-reaching influence in the next centuries, especially among Franciscans and Fraticelli, and, as I have stated above, there are obvious similarities between Fiore's Age of the Lily and Boehme's *Lilienzeit*.

Although general millenarian expectations are no proof of Joachim's influence, because these could have come directly from the Apocalypse, the true mark, however, of a Protestant Joachimism is, according to Reeves, the third historical status, with the Old and New Testaments representing the first and second status. The third status may be ushered in by an intermediate coming of Christ, not in the flesh but in an outpouring of the Spirit, not to be confused with the Parousia at the end of world history. Some church historians have argued that in the absence of direct evidence it is probable that the parallels with Joachim of Fiore's ideas spring from a particular type of religious experience and hope.⁵¹⁸ Carl Jung discovered Joachim of Fiore as a psycholog-

⁵¹⁵ Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore: A Study in Spiritual Perception and History*, Bloomington, 1983, p. 17.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵¹⁸ Bakhuizen van den Brink, *Handboek der Kerkgeschiedenis*, Leeuwarden, 4th ed., 1980, Vol. 2, pp. 158-160 and Vol. 3, Chapter XXIX, pp. 97-108; In *Joachim of Fiore in Christian Thought: Essays on the Influence of the Calabrian Prophet*, Vol. 1, New York, 1975, Delno C. West states that there is little doubt that elements of Joachite thought infiltrated the Lollards in England and the Brethren of the Free Spirit in the Netherlands. In M. Bloomfield's essay "Joachim of Flora: A Critical Survey of his Canon, Teachings, Sources, Biography, and Influence" Bloomfield argues that Wyclif was well aware of Joachim and of Joachite speculation in general, and that Wyclif refers to the Abbot Joachim more than once (p. 82). He further mentions Nicholas of Cusa as having been influenced by Joachim (p. 83).

ical phenomenon placing him in the context of “an epoch noted for its spiritual instability” when “everyone felt the rushing wind of the pneuma”. He viewed Joachim as “one of the most powerful and influential voices to announce the coming new age of the spirit”, or third aeon.⁵¹⁹

The people discussed above all held certain themes in common, especially the expectation of an immediate catastrophe in the near future combined with an optimistic attitude towards the future within history, and an ecumenical belief in the possibility of a *concordia mundi*, a reign of peace both ecclesiastical and political: a progress towards the light. It is the same theme that occupied Richardson when writing *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*.

Boehme's Millenarianism

Boehme's views of the true Church and his millenarian beliefs are relevant, not only because they are in some ways reminiscent of Fiore, but also because they show certain similarities with those of the Quakers, Cheyne, Law, Richardson as well as the Moravians. In the *Mysterium Magnum* Boehme showed that he believed the “sixth seal” was now “at hand” and “had already opened itself” and he warned his readers “to go out from Babel”. In chapter 43, “Ruin of Sodom and Gomorrah”, he informs the reader that the “sifting sword is already active” in this present world:

In this figure this present world may behold itselfe, and take warning; for as certain, and as true, that the Preaching of Lot was true; and the punishment followed thereupon; so certainly also shall the punishment of the Sixt Seals Time (which Seal is even now at hand, and hath already opened itselfe) suddenly follow. But that the warning thereof came so long agoe, declareth that the time of the Sixt Seal, in its manifestation, is the most wonderful of all the Six Seales; till the Seventh Number which is yet more wonderfull; for it is the *end of this world*, and the *Last Judgement*. Let this be declared unto thee Babel, under the voice of the open Seal of this Sixt time, although thou contemnest, and deridest it, it hitteth thee, and hath already stricken thee with the obdurate obstinacy of wrath, which hath thoroughly sifted thee in the appearance of the Message of these two Angels, and shall now be hinted onely to some few, which shall go out, and be delivered with Lots daughters. The hardened surprized and apprehended crew is already Judged; for the Dolefull sifting Sword hath taken hold of them; they run now in a raving raging manner, as mad people in Pride, Covetousness and Envy, and contem what the Angels trumpet soundeth. The Cry which the angels trumpet soundeth is this; Go out from Babel; Go out from Babel; Go out from Babel. Shee stands apprehended and captivated in the Flaming Sword. Amen. (*Mysterium Magnum*, 43:67-71)

⁵¹⁹ 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.

Yet Boehme's attitude towards the concept of the millennium is rather vague, as confirmed by Garden.⁵²⁰ Nils Thune quotes Boehme's millenarian view as follows:

As to the first resurrection from the dead to a millennial Sabbath, recorded in Revelation ... I am not sufficiently acquainted with what it implies, ... whether it means a thousand solar years, or not. Since I have not been able to comprehend it, I will leave it to God and those whom God might reveal it to.⁵²¹

Equally vague is Boehme's answer to the thirty-eighth question in the *XL Questions concerning the Soule* as to "what are the things that shall come to passe at the End of the World?" Boehme writes that he was not the right person to answer this question and that, moreover, it is not fit for anyone to ask it, for it is "the secret counsell of God". He adds that "none should endeavour to be equall with God, and to foreknow all things", reminding the reader of what Daniel, Ezekiel, and David have said in their prophecies. In addition he especially mentions "the Revelation of Jesus Christ". But Boehme does inform the reader that "the time is now nearer at [sic] end" as a result of which "it appeareth the more plainly what shall be done at the end" (*XL Questions*, 38:1; 9-10).⁵²²

From the above it is clear that we should not confuse Boehme's Age of the Holy Spirit with the millennium. What Boehme was looking forward to was not a millennium on earth, but a paradisaical world ruled by the inner light, a stage before the coming of Christ and the subsequent end of the world. In answer to the thirty-ninth question "What, and where is Paradise, with its Inhabitants?", Boehme answered that it is in this world, though withdrawn from our sight and our source. He believed that if only we would open our eyes, we should see it. He added that "God in his Ternary is with us", so he wondered "how then should paradise be lost?" And he referred to the seekers who have sought this paradise: "For every age hath its Seekers, who have sought the *Mysterium*" (*XL Questions*, 39:1; 4; 6-8).

⁵²⁰ See p. 170 above.

⁵²¹ Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians: A Contribution to the Study of English Mysticism in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Uppsala, 1948, pp. 31-32.

⁵²² See the *Threefold Life of Man* in which Boehme writes: "For this Time [from the beginning of the world to the end] is as the soyle [or ground], and is the *seventh* Seal of the Eternall Nature, wherein the *six* Seales, with their Powers and Wonders, disclose themselves, and *powre* forth their wrath ... where one Seale hath been opened after another: but humane Reason hath not understood the *powers* of the Seales (3:41). Also: "Behold! When the seventh Seale shall be opened, then the Arch-Shepherd will feed his sheepe *himselfe*, in his greene Pasture: he leadeth them to the springing Waters, and refresheth their Soules, and bringeth them into his *right* Path, and is a *good* Shephard, and the sheepe follow him, and he giveth them Eternall Life. Therefore hearken, you that are drowsie, and awake, the Day breaketh, it is high time; that you may not be captivated by the *Anger in Babel* ... leave off your contention about the Cup of Christ, else you will be found to be but fooles in the presence of God: your *Decrees* availe nothing And another party gainsayeth; and they call one another *Heretics*, and so you lead the blinde Layity, captive in your *Devellish* Contention, in your Pride." (3:80-82).

Boehme perceived it as his task to bring about a new Reformation, symbolized as the *Lilienzeit*. Beyreuther quotes Boehme's words in the *Aurora*: "Es ist mir [Boehme] diese große und schwere Arbeit auferlegt worden, der Welt zu offenbaren und anzukündigen den großen Tag des Herrn."⁵²³ And Beyreuther explains that:

Die Zeit ist zugleich reif geworden für eine neue, umfassende und durchgreifende Reformation, denn die alte und erste ist steckengeblieben. Die Morgenröte eines neuen hellen Tages, der die nächtlichen Schatten verscheucht, ist bereits in Sicht. Der Geist des Herrn wird eine neue Gemeinschaft aller echten Gotteskinder quer aus allen Konfessionen hindurch ins Leben rufen. Die Kirchen werden bleiben, doch ein Neues, das niemand mehr hindern kann, kommt und wird einen neuen Tag noch vor dem Erscheinen des Herrn für die ganze jetzt so verdorbene Christenheit bereiten.⁵²⁴

Boehme's words written down in the *Aurora* were to influence so many people looking for a religion of the heart, ranging from the Quakers to Zinzendorf and the Moravians to Cheyne, Law and Richardson, who gave expression to Boehme's vision. Richardson did so in a preparatory way first in *Clarissa* (the broken lily) in the postscript of which he reflected upon the age in which he lived:

It will be seen by this time that the author had *a great end in view*. He has lived to see scepticism and infidelity openly avowed, and even endeavoured to be propagated from the press: the great doctrines of the gospel brought into question:⁵²⁵ those of self-denial and mortification blotted out of the catalogue of Christian virtues: and a taste even to wantonness for out-door pleasure and luxury, to the general exclusion of domestic as well as public virtue, industriously promoted among all ranks and degrees of people. In this general depravity, when even the pulpit has lost great part of its weight, and the clergy are considered as a body of interested men, the author thought he should be able to answer it to *his own heart*, be the success what it would, if *he threw in his mite towards introducing a reformation so much wanted*. (IV. 553) (Italics are mine)

Then, finally, in its full-blown form we find Boehme's vision in *Sir Charles*

⁵²³ Cf. Erich Beyreuther, *Geschichte des Pietismus*, Stuttgart, 1978, p. 26. The English translation of the first line is to be found in the *Aurora*, 23:92: "This great, weighty and hard Labour was laid upon me, which is, to Manifest and *reveal* to the world, and to make known, *the great day of the LORD*; and, being they seek and Long so eagerly after the *Root of the Tree*: to reveal to them what the whole Tree is, thereby to intimate that it is *the Dawning, or Morning-Redness of the Day*, which God hath long ago *Decreed* in his Council."

⁵²⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

⁵²⁵ See Lovelace's remark that "*Law and Gospel* are two very different things" (*Clarissa*, II. 471).

Grandison, in which Sir Charles builds the Temple of Christ into "Wall-Churches".

As to the true Church, Boehme believed that this was not limited to any definite space: the saints always have their Church with them. Moreover, he argued that the true Church is not confined to any special denomination. He writes that a Christian has no sect, though he may live among sects and also attend their divine services. A Christian does not belong to any sect, for he has "only one science" - Christ in him. It was not that Boehme wished to abolish "Wall-Churches", but, as he said in the *Mysterium Magnum*, to teach the "Temple of Christ", to be brought along in the heart.⁵²⁶

Hence Boehme's goal was not to found a new church or sect, but a mutual fellowship, a communion based on brotherly love unlimited by space and time which would put an end to all contention between human beings. We will see in chapter 7 how Richardson used this concept in *Sir Charles Grandison* when he had Sir Charles build a little temple to "consecrate" the friendship between him (God, or the Ternary), Harriet (the Church of England) and Clementina (the Roman Catholic Church). For Boehme writes in the *Mysterium Magnum* that "when the branches shall know that they Stand in the Tree they will never say that they are peculiar and Singular Trees". They will then "rejoyce in their Stem", and they will see that they are all boughs and branches of one tree, and that they do all receive "power and life from one Onely Stem" (*Mysterium Magnum*, XXX:52).

The discord between the various churches or sects is one of the main issues in *Sir Charles Grandison*, which contains Richardson's vision of a united Christendom as we shall see in the next chapter.

⁵²⁶ Boehme wrote: "Not that we would hereby wholly abolish and race down the Stone-Churches; but we teach the Temple of Christ, which ought to be brought along [in the heart] into the Stone-Church, or else the whole business of the Stone-Church is onely a hypocriticall antichristian whoredome, a Cains offering, both of the Preacher and the hearer: so that one is not a whit better than another, unlesse he enter through the true doore, Christ in Spirit and power in the Temple of Christ, into the Stone-Church, or at least resolve to fix betake and fasten him selfe there, into such an earnest desire [that he will take and hold fast that which is good onely for the amendment of his life]" (*Mysterium Magnum*, XXVII:49). Cf. also Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians*, Uppsala, 1948, pp. 30-31. Boehme compared the true Church with Abel.