

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE OTHER: THE ANTICHRIST

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Introduction

No "construction of the other"¹ has called for more ingenious and unbridled imaginative resources than the construction of the Antichrist.² It is the purpose of this article to trace the trajectory of the Antichrist from the biblical and pseudepigraphic sources to somewhat beyond the Second Temple period. The focus will be on four aspects of this construction: (1) the Antichrist as external foe(s), (2) the mythic dimensions of the Antichrist, (3) the Antichrist as internal foe(s), and (4) the collective Antichrist. In the course of the paper, as occasion presents itself, we shall inquire concerning the sociological and anthropological implications behind such eagle flights of the imagination.

In spite of commentators' free use of the label, the term "Antichrist"³ does not occur in the Apocalypse of John but only in the Epistles of John (1 John 2:18, 22; and 2 John 4:11). Therefore, in considering this figure, we must make use of other labels,⁴ symbols, and

¹This paper was presented in an earlier version to the Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity Seminar at Notre Dame University during the autumn of 1993, when the topic under consideration was the "construction of the other."

²Literally the term means "contrary to the anointed one," although it can be used in a temporal as well as adversative sense. Cf. Isidore *Etymologiarum* 20.63r.

³Further research on the manuals of physiognomy indicates that, although the portrayal of the Antichrist is fictive, each feature is chosen carefully according to the cultural practices of dishonoring persons and describing their appearance to indicate their moral disposition. See my paper, "The Physical Appearance of the Antichrist," delivered at St. Andrew's University, Scotland, June 1994.

⁴For the most recent work on the Antichrist in the early centuries, see Gregory C. Jenks, *The Origins and Early Development of the Antichrist Myth* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991). This has an excellent collection of texts accompanied by translations. The introduction summarizes major research on the Antichrist. W. Bousset, *Der Antichrist in der Überlieferung des Judentums, des Neuen Testaments und der alten Kirche* (reprinted Hildesheim: Olms, 1983); M. Friedländer, *Der Antichrist in den vorchristlichen jüdischen Quellen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901); R. H. Charles, *Ascension of Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1919), li-lxxiii; and R. H. Charles, *Revelation*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956-1959), 2:76-87; W. A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the*

synonyms to reconstruct the portrait of so eminent a personage.

Neyrey and Malina see the process of labeling as providing "a social distancing device, . . . thus dividing social categories into polarities such as the good and the wicked."⁵ They remark negative labeling as a "social act of retaliation," which challenges honor, signifies aggression, or constitutes a means of defense. Negative labeling can lead to lethal consequences. These scholars also see one of the phases of the process of labeling as "the actual processing of the deviant by the creation of a retrospective interpretation of the deviant's life."⁶ This is certainly true of the Antichrist.

*Historicization of the Concept of
the Antichrist as External Foe*

As regards the biblical text, I shall comment very briefly on 2 Thessalonians and then concentrate on Revelation 13. The discussion of 1 and 2 John is in the third section.

2 Thess 2:1-12: The "Lawless One" Introduced

This text,⁷ earlier than the Johannine epistles, speaks of the coming of ὁ ἄνομος. This personage appears to be a human figure modeled on Antiochus Epiphanes (or possibly Caligula), who was seen as a type of the Antichrist.⁸ He is the false prophet who usurps God's throne and who will be slain by a belligerent Jesus.⁹ Although the biblical text does not use the term *antichristos*, the figure was soon interpreted in terms of the Antichrist (e.g., Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 5.25.1; Tertullian *De*

Johannine Christology (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 47-55; J. Ernst, *Die eschatologischen Gegenspieler in den Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, Biblische Untersuchungen 3 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1967), x; W. C. Weinrich, "The Antichrist in the Early Church," *Concordia Theological Review* 49 (1985): 135-147.

⁵See B. J. Malina and J. H. Neyrey, *Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1988), 37.

⁶*Ibid.*, 81.

⁷See C. H. Giblin, *The Threat to Faith: An Exegetical and Theological Re-examination of 2 Thess 2* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967); W. Trilling, *Die zweite Brief an die Thessalonicher*, Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar 14 (Zurich: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1980), 81-105; R. Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); A. J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Hans-Heinrich Schade, *Apokalyptische Christologie bei Paulus: Studien zum Zusammenhang von Christologie und Eschatologie in den Paulusbrieffen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981).

⁸Compare, for example, Cyprian *Ad Fortunatum* 11; Jerome *Commentary on Daniel Prologue*; 2.8; 4.11.

⁹See Giblin, 89-95. This recurs frequently in patristic sources, e.g., Quodvultdeus *Dimidium temporis* 16.

resurrectione carnis 24.18-20; 2.45).¹⁰

Important features in the portrayal of the Lawless One are the following: (1) He is labeled "the Lawless One" and the "Son of Perdition"; (2) he is arrogant to the point of blasphemy, even establishing himself in the temple of God; (3) at the present time he (or it) is restrained; (4) the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; (5) he is the agent of Satan; (6) he comes with power, signs, and miracles; (7) he is guilty of wicked deception; (8) those who follow him will perish; and (9) Danielic influence on the text is discernible.

Here, therefore, we have the basic "ingredients" of the Antichrist: arrogance, blasphemy (sacrilege), deception, and destruction. However, he is still on a human plane and the Thessalonian correspondent does not indulge in the rich imagery that we shall encounter later. The text shows affinity with the Person of the Lie in the Qumran material.¹¹

*The Mythic and Theriomorphic Dimension of the Antichrist
The Two Beasts and Dragon in the Apocalypse of John*

In the Apocalypse we find another dimension to the Antichrist—the mythic, mysterious, profound. The two beasts in Rev 13 are frequently identified with the Antichrist and his allies in patristic sources. Examples of this identification are those of Tertullian, "the beast Antichrist with his false prophet may wage war on the Church of God" (*De resurrectione carnis* 25), and Augustine, who speaks of "four beasts, signifying four kingdoms, and the fourth of them overcome by a certain king who is recognized as the Antichrist" (*De civitate Dei* 20.23); (cf. *Quodvultdeus Liber Promissiorum* 2.24; *Dimidium temporis* 8). Jerome says that the fourth beast is Antiochus

¹⁰Cf. Aponius *Commentary on Canticle of Canticles* 12; Rufinus *Expositio in Symbolum apostolorum* 32; Augustine, *Epistula* 199; *Quodvultdeus Dimidium temporis* 9; Jerome *Commentary on Isaiah* 7.19; *Commentary on Daniel* 2.7; 4.11.

¹¹H. Burgmann, "Der Josuafluch zur Zeit des Makkabäers Simon (143-134 v. Chr.)," *BZ* 19 (1975): 26-40. He argues that Simon was seen as the creature and tool of the devil and that we may suppose that the original historical picture of Simon later developed into the picture of the antimessiah and still later the antichrist. The Qumran texts suggest this, for they treat of four persons: the one who will come at the end time, the prophet, the worldly and spiritual messiah, and the man who will play the role of opponent to the creature of Belial (38). Simon is labeled the "Person of the Lie" (1QHab 2; CD 20,15), the Person of Mockery (CD 1.14), the Preacher of Vanity (CD 4.19), the Preacher of Lies (1QHab 9); CD 8.13=19.25f; cf. 1QHab 3, 12, 18. (39 cf p. 40). Compare also his article, "Der Gründer der Pharisäergemeinschaft der Makkabäer Simon," *JSJ* 9 (1978): 153-191, especially 165, where he suggests that the "whore" (4 Q 184 I) may be a nickname for the Person of the Lie, and 189-190, where he refers to Rosenstiehl's suggestion of a link with the physiognomic texts at Qumran (Jean-Marc Rosenstiehl, "Le portrait de l'antichrist," in *Pseudépigraphes de l'ancien testament et manuscrits de la Mer Morte* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967], 45-60. Burgmann suggests that the antichrist may have been the creation of the Qumran community, with which I do not wholly agree.

Epiphanes but he is a type of the Antichrist (*Commentary on Daniel* 2.7).

The two beasts in Rev 13 may owe their origin to the great animals described in Job: the Leviathan or male sea monster (Job 41) and Behemoth the great female land monster (Job 40:15-24).¹² But in our text the influence of Daniel is much more obvious. Here we are faced with potent theriomorphic symbolism,¹³ for the author draws upon the luxuriant tradition of the Ancient Near East with regard to mythic animals,¹⁴ some of whom battle with Yahweh.¹⁵

The Dragon of Rev 12

The dragon of Rev 12 is not always identified with the Antichrist although he is his agent. He may, therefore, be given short shrift! Suffice it to say that he is the chaos dragon, identified with Satan and the serpent. He reflects Tiamat, in rage against the gods who produces monsters, vipers, dragons, lions, sphinxes, scorpions, and wild dogs.¹⁶ Rev 12 does identify the dragon with Satan and the old serpent, and around him the author of the Apocalypse weaves the story behind Isa 14.

The dragon belongs to the genus of the "serpent." Serpents were awesome creatures. Aelian says that Egypt is "the mother of the very largest serpents [δρακωντων], 180 feet: they can kill elephants" (*De Natura Animalium* 2:21). The serpents of Phrygia are sixty feet long. In Mysia the serpents suck in whole birds by their breath: they also slaughter sheep and herdsmen.

However, the symbolic nature of the serpent is explained in the *Physiologus*,¹⁷ a book on animal symbolism incorporating folklore as early as Herodotus and also Indian, Egyptian, and Hebrew legends which passed into the Greco-Roman culture. The author is unknown. The conjectured date is between 200 and the late fifth century A.D. This work was perpetuated in the bestiaries of the Middle Ages. Of the viper (*echidnes*) the author says:

¹²See also Job 3:8 (θ); 7:12; Ps 73:13f.

¹³Cf. the "Animal Apocalypse," *1 Enoch* 85-90.

¹⁴See P. Michel, *Tiere als Symbol und Ornament* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1979). Although this work is primarily concerned with the Middle Ages, it has some valuable insights into the use and meaning of animal symbolism.

¹⁵See N. Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987) and A. Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 9 (Missoula: Scholars, 1976).

¹⁶P. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon, 1969), 178.

¹⁷D. Kaimakis, *Der Physiologus nach der ersten Redaktion*, Beiträge zu Klassischen Philologie 63 (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1974); M. J. Curley, trans., *Physiologus* (Austin: University of Texas, 1979); R. Foerster, *Scriptores Physio-gnomonici Graeci et Latini*, vols. 1 and 2 (Lipsiae: B. G. Teubneri, 1893).

. . . the viper's brood kills its father and mother, so this people [the Pharisees] which is without God kills its father, Jesus Christ, and its earthly mother, Jerusalem.¹⁸

So our dragon is probably to be identified with the serpent who was deemed the most demonic of all creatures in antiquity.¹⁹ This creature opposed God at creation and will oppose God at the *eschaton*. The dragon personifies chaos versus harmony. He is frequently identified with Satan.

The Sea Beast of Rev 13

The sea beast is most frequently identified with the Antichrist. For example, Hippolytus avers:

As Daniel says, "I considered the beast, and lo there were ten horns behind it" And under this was signified none other than Antichrist, who is also himself to raise the kingdom of the Jews. He says that three horns are plucked up by the root by him, viz., the three kings of Egypt, and Libya, and Ethiopia, whom he cuts off in the array of battle. And he, after gaining terrible power over all, being nevertheless a tyrant, shall stir up tribulation and persecution against men, exalting himself against them.²⁰

In his study *Metaphors and Monsters*, Paul A. Porter sees the monsters in Dan 7 and 8 as metaphors with semantic "tension" or "interaction."

Underlying this approach is the conviction that certain metaphorical expressions in Daniel 7 and 8 are semantically active. Just as new things may emerge in nature from hitherto ungrouped combinations of

¹⁸Curley, 16. However, the Latin bestiary of the twelfth century gives him a more severe critique. He is the biggest of all serpents, "in fact of all living things on earth." He is often carried up into the sky. His strength lies in his tail. He is immune to poison. The text continues: "The Devil, who is the most enormous of all reptiles, is like this dragon. He is often borne into the air from his den, and the air round him blazes, for the Devil in raising himself from the lower regions translates himself into an angel of light and misleads the foolish with false hopes of glory and worldly bliss. He is said to have a crest or crown because he is King of Pride, and his strength is not in his teeth but in his tail because he beguiles those whom he draws to him by deceit, their strength being destroyed. He lies hidden round the paths on which they saunter, because their way to heaven is encumbered by the knots of their sins, and he strangles them to death. For if anybody is ensnared by the toils of crime he dies, and no doubt he goes to Hell." The Latin text can be found in F. Unterkircher, *Bestiarium: die Texte der Handschrift Ms. Ashmole 1511 der Bodleian Library Oxford, Lateinisch-Deutsch. Interpretationes et Codices 3* (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1986). The English translation is that of T. H. White, *The Book of Beasts, Being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century* (New York: Dover, 1984), 166, 167.

¹⁹See TDNT under δράκων.

²⁰Demonstratio de Christo et Antichristo 25; Gk text from Norelli; translation from ANF. See also 26-29 and compare Beatus *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 6.122; Primasius *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 4.13.

elements, so tensive or interaction-type metaphorical expressions communicate new meaning by juxtaposing normally unjoined ideas or images.²¹

Similarly from his new creation the author of the Apocalypse introduces us to a new facet of the Antichrist. While the parallels between Daniel and Rev 13 are impressive, as appears in Beale's chart,²² our author has considerably modified the material from Daniel.

The first monster emerges from the sea. As Schlier says:

Es ist wohl das Meer der Welt, in das der Satan blickt und in dem er so, im Erkennen seiner selbst, sein Spiegelbild erzeugt. Das Meer ist dabei der "Abgrund" (11, 7) des Kosmos, aber zugleich—denn das ist kein Widerspruch—das Meer im Westen, wo Rom liegt und von wo der Antichrist kommt . . . es ist das listige [cunning], plumpe [shapeless], alles verschlingende Imperium, die von bestialischen Instinkten beherrschte, in bestialischen Formen zutage tretende Weltmacht.²³

Indeed, returning to Paul Porter, the nature of the beast is not merely a trespass against "kosher breeding,"²⁴ beasts who transgress boundaries are composite, malevolent beings,²⁵ genetic "mongrels." The cluster of metaphors has a deeper meaning. Porter traces the physical characteristics of the beasts in Dan 7 and 8 to Mesopotamian wisdom traditions. We may compare Rev 13:18 (ὄδε ἡ σοφία ἐστίν) and Rev 17:9. He suggests that Daniel draws upon omen texts and quotes Grayson to the effect that "prognostic texts make up the single largest category in Ashurbanipal's library."²⁶ He selects divination tablets from Mesopotamia dated from ca. 1600 to ca. 1000 B.C.).

The *Šumma izbu* interprets animal anomalies in the light of political events; e.g., "If an anomaly has two heads, but (only) one neck—the king will conquer wherever he turns."²⁷ Multiple-horned anomalies are described

²¹P. A. Porter, *Metaphors and Monsters*, Coniectanea Biblica, OT Series 20 (Lund: Gleerup, 1983), 4. Cf. P. Wheelwright, *The Burning Fountain* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1954), 101-122.

²²G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 229-230, 232-233, 240-241, 242-243 (charts) and 229-248 for his commentary.

²³H. Schlier, "Vom Antichrist-Zum 13. Kapitel der Offenbarung Johannes," in *Die Zeit der Kirche* (Freiburg: Herder, 1956), 21; cf. 16-29.

²⁴Cf. the prohibition against mixed species in Lev 19:19 and Mishnah *Kil.* 8:1. Josephus says, ". . . nature does not delight in the conjunction of things dissimilar" (*Antiquities* 4. 229).

²⁵Cf. *Testament of Solomon* 12 (three-headed dragon), 15 (the female dragon with two heads), and the other angels who take the crude shape of hybrid animals.

²⁶Porter, 15, 16; he refers to the mention of the "wise" in Dan 11 and 12.

²⁷Erle Leichty, *The Omen Series Šumma izbu* (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1970),

in Tablet IX. Horns might betoken conquest of the enemy, expansion of the kingdom, or the enemy residing in the land. Porter sees the following parallels:

Daniel 7

v. 4 The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. . . .

v. 5 And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. . . .

v. 6 After this I looked and lo, another, like a leopard. . . .

v. 13 I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man. . . .

Šumma izbu

V 50 If a ewe gives birth to a lion, and it has the head of a *hūqu*-bird—the son of a widow will seize the throne.

V 107 If a ewe gives birth to a bear—a person with no right to the throne will seize it.

V 96 If a ewe gives birth to a leopard—a prince will seize universal kingship.

V 51 If a ewe gives birth to a lion, and it has a human face. . . .

XVIII 33 If a goat gives birth to a human, (var.), a cripple. . . .

XX 24 If a mare gives birth to a human—the whole land will have a good fortune.

Both the dragon and the sea beast have ten horns and seven heads. The dragon has crowns on his heads; the sea beast wears crowns on his horns. Although I do not postulate direct influence of the Omen Oracles on Rev 13, yet this kind of symbolism is not alien to the Mediterranean culture. We have a belligerent and potent sign, an omen that the Antichrist will go conquering and to conquer. The beast is ominous in every sense of the word.²⁸

However, the sea beast is even more complicated. It is like a panther, (*παρδάλει*)²⁹ with feet like a bear³⁰ and a mouth like a lion.³¹ These are curious features for one who emerges from the sea. He can, therefore, be classed as a prodigy,³² a sign that the *pax deorum* is disturbed or in danger

²⁸For horns see also *T. Jos.* 19, Dan 7:8, and *Šumma izbu* 9.69-70.

²⁹Aristotle notes: "They say too that the panther has learned that wild animals like her scent, and hunts them by concealing herself: they come near, and thus she catches even the deer" (*History of Animals* 8.612).

³⁰Aristotle *History of Animals* 2.498: ". . . like those of a bear, for each has five toes, and each toe has three flexions and a smallish nail. The hind feet also have five toes, and flexions and nails similar to those of the front feet."

³¹Aristotle *History of Animals* 2.501a: "All blooded viviparous quadrupeds have teeth, but to begin with some have teeth in both jaws while others have not. . . . Furthermore, some of them are saw-toothed; e.g., the lion, the leopard and the dog. . . . (By "saw-toothed" is meant those animals whose sharp-pointed teeth interlock)."

³²See Julius Obsequens *Prodigiorum Liber* and also Livy's frequent references to augury.

of being so.³³ He is a predatory beast; indeed, the author uses a cluster metaphor referring to the three most feared predatory animals—panther, bear, and lion—in order to suggest the character of the Antichrist.

We turn again to the *Physiologus* to attempt to discover the import of the symbolism of these three wild animals. Most translations render *pardalei* by “leopard” or “panther.” However, as both the *Physiologus* and the *Bestiary* give the panther a positive appraisal, it is most likely that our author means the “hyena.”³⁴ Hyenas are described as “viciously clever (*kakoethēs*) animals,” who change their sex every year.³⁵ The *Physiologus* (38) avers that this makes the creature (called the “brute” in Latin) unclean. Aelian notes that a hyena can imitate the human voice to lure persons into its trap. He also says:

The Hyena . . . can with a mere touch induce torpor. . . . The Hyena scoops out the earth beneath the head to such a depth as makes the head bend back into the hole, leaving the throat uppermost and exposed. Thereupon it fastens on to the animal, throttles it, and carries it off to its lair. . . . Having bewitched them [dogs], as sorceresses do, it then carries them off tongue-tied and thereafter puts them to such use as it pleases.³⁶

The *Physiologus* sees the hyena as the symbol of double-minded, voluptuous, lecherous, and idolatrous persons.³⁷ These characteristics, as we will see below, are consonant with the character of the Antichrist.

Our beast is also supernaturally endowed, for he is intimately associated with the devil, the old serpent, who gives him “his power and his throne and great authority” (Rev 13:2). However, we have a third feature which is of vital importance, namely, mimetic rivalry. The beast, like Satan, demands the worship due only to God. Our author expatiates on the blasphemous behavior of the beast (vv 5-7). We note also the mortal wound which may suggest mimetic rivalry with Christ and his resurrection. Here we find the nucleus of the Satanic trinity.

³³Porter also compares the Animal Apocalypse of *1 Enoch* 85-90 (Porter, 48-60).

³⁴The word is *παρδαλίς* which can mean leopard, panther, or hyena (Aelian *De natura animalium* 6.2). Cf. *παρδαλέην ἤνεσθαι*, of a shift person (Eustathius *Commentary on Iliad and Odyssey* 374.44). *Pardalis* is also a metaphor for savage persons (4 Macc 9:28).

³⁵Aelian *De natura animalium* 7. 22; 1.25.

³⁶Aelian *De natura animalium* 6.14; 7.25.

³⁷Porter summarizes attempts to trace the origin of the beasts in Dan 7—Babylonian and Canaanite traditions, astrological symbols, Mesopotamian art forms, or the three most dangerous predatory animals known to Israel (Porter, 34-35; cf. Hubert Junker, *Untersuchungen über literarische und exegetische Probleme des buches Daniel* (Bonn: Hamstein, 1932), 37. Wittstruck explains the lion, bear and panther against a background of treaty curses dealing with predatory animals (Thorne Wittstruck, “The Influence of Treaty Curse Imagery on the Beast Imagery of Daniel 7,” *JBL* 94 (1978): 100-102).

Second Beast of Rev 13

The second beast of Rev 13 has two horns like a lamb (in contrast with the Lamb of Rev 5, who has seven horns) and speaks like a dragon. She is a land beast and no less important than the first beast. Hippolytus identifies her with the kingdom of the Antichrist:

By the beast, then, coming up out of the earth, he means the kingdom of Antichrist; and by the two horns he means him and the false prophet after him. And in speaking of "the horns like a lamb," he means that he will make himself like the Son of God, and set himself forward as a king. . . . "He exercised all the power of the first beast before him" signifies that, after the manner of the law of Augustus, by whom the empire of Rome was established, he too will rule and govern, sanctioning everything by it, and taking greater glory to himself . . . and he [Antichrist] then shall with knavish skill heal it, as it were, and restore it.³⁸

This second beast may be the theric presentation of the false prophet predicted in Deut 13. Later she will take her place as the false spirit in the satanic trinity. She leads the people astray with signs and wonders to practice idolatry. As the Spirit was breathed into Adam and into the bones in Ezekiel's vision, so this false spirit breathes life into the image of the first beast.³⁹ She is the false paraclete, who gives a "character" to her initiants.

John implies that she mimics the Lamb. He *may* perhaps have in mind the tradition of the Bokkhoris Lamb from Egypt, a prophetic lamb that appeared in the reign of King Bokkhoris (718-712 B.C.). Porter (23) makes the following parallel:

Aelian *De natura animalium*

12.3. The Egyptians assert (though they are far from convincing me), they assert, I say, that in the days of the far-famed Bocchoris a Lamb was born with eight feet and two tails, and that it spoke.

Šumma izbu

8.84. If an anomaly has two *heads*, four shoulders, two tails (and) eight *feet*—one throne will overthrow the other.

In summation we may say that various background factors converge to form this construction of the Antichrist. Among them we have sketched the following: (1) the sea monster, Tiamat or Yamm, who was demythologized to depict a political power⁴⁰ and other hybrid beasts; (2)

³⁸Hippolytus *De Antichristo* 49.2.

³⁹Note that the *Physiologus* 1 and the bestiaries state that the lion gives birth to dead babies but after three days she breathes life into them.

⁴⁰See Bousset, *Der Antichrist*; also A.E. Brooke, *Johannine Epistles*, ICC, 69-70; also T. Jacobsen, "The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat," *JAOS* 88 (1968): 104-108.

Satan or the Angelic Adversary;⁴¹ (3) a human ruler embodying evil; and (4) the false prophet (Deut 13:2-6 and 18:20).⁴²

Bios/Vita of the Antichrist

I shall find it most convenient to use material from the Pseudepigrapha and the early patristic works in my summary of the Bios or Vita of the Antichrist. No one pens a biography⁴³ of an insignificant personage and hence it is from the Bios of the Antichrist that we learn how his persona is construed, both in literature⁴⁴ and in art. It is comparatively easy to draw up a Bios of the Antichrist. Treatises on the Antichrist include those of Hippolytus (*Περὶ χριστοῦ καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἀντίχριστου*)⁴⁵ and Adso (*De Ortu et Tempore Antichristi* and *Pseudo Alcuin*).⁴⁶ The most detailed construction of the Vita of the Antichrist is in Adso.

Origin and birth

The ancestry of the Antichrist was of great interest to early Christians. His forerunners included Lamech, Nimrod, Balaam, Achan, Goliath, and Judas.⁴⁷ He was of Jewish parentage from the tribe of Dan,⁴⁸ which is not listed among the twelve in Rev 7.⁴⁹

⁴¹Compare *I Enoch* 6-16, where Azazel is bound in a pit until final times, to be released in the final struggle. Cf. 1 QM 1.1-2; *Sib. Or.* 3. 63-74.

⁴²Note the eschatological false prophet in *Didachē* 16.3-4. *SibOr* 3:63-74 describes Beliar performing signs and wonders.

⁴³Malina and Neyrey remark how constructing a *Vita* can be part of the negative labeling process (Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew* [Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1988], 81).

⁴⁴Much of which must have been in oral form originally. On this point, see Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend* (London: Hutchinson, 1896), 30-31.

⁴⁵I use E. Norelli, *L'Antichristo*, Biblioteca Patristica 10 (Florence: Nardini, 1987).

⁴⁶Adso Verdensis, *De Ortu et Tempore Antichristi*, ed. D. Verhelst (Turnholt: Brepols, 1976); this book includes *Pseudo Alcuin*.

⁴⁷See the table in Richard Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 32.

⁴⁸... from the bottomless impiety of the Jewish people" (*Pseudo Alcuin* 1.148); see Gen 49:10-17; Deut 33:22; Jer 8:16; Isa 25:6-8. Hippolytus notes: "... and in naming the tribe of Dan, he declared clearly the tribe from which Antichrist is destined to spring. For as Christ springs from the tribe of Judah, so Antichrist is to spring from the tribe of Dan and that the case stands thus we see from the words of Jacob: 'Let Dan be a serpent, lying upon the ground, biting the horse's heel.'" Hippolytus also quotes Jer 8:16, the whole earth trembling at the sound of the cavalry of Dan (cf. Rev 9:7-21) (*Antichrist* 14). Cf. Ambrose *De Patriarchis* 7.32-34; Rufinus, *De Benedictionibus patriarcharum* 2.16; Augustine *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum* 6. 22; Quodvultdeus *Dimidium temporis* 9; Adso, 20-24.

⁴⁹Irenaeus *Adversus haereses* 5.30. See A. Geysler, "The Twelve Tribes in Revelation: Judean and Judeo-Christian Apocalypticism," *NTS* (1982): 388-399; and R. Bergmeier, "Jerusalem, du hochgebaute Stadt," *ZNW* 75 (1984): 86-106.

Conception

Two main traditions concern the conception of the Antichrist: (a) he was to be born naturally from human parents and (b) he was to be engendered by an evil spirit and a whore. The *Apocalypse of Daniel*⁵⁰ devotes considerable detail to this point. It claims that the Antichrist will come from Hades and enter a "small garidion⁵¹ fish." This fish is conveniently purchased by a virgin who, upon ingesting it, becomes pregnant with the Antichrist. Her names are Injustice and Perdition. The Antichrist is born prematurely, after only three months of gestation. He is suckled for four months.⁵²

Adso states that he will be born of human parents, not from a virgin. Further, he will be conceived and born in sin.

At the very moment of conception the devil will enter into the womb of his mother and will nourish the fetus. As the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and filled her with divinity so that the child born from her was divine, the devil will descend on the mother of the Antichrist and fill her completely, possess her inwardly and outwardly and with the help of the devil she will conceive through a male and what is born will be the epitomy of evil. So this man is called the "Man of Iniquity," for he will lead astray the whole human race. Finally he himself will be annihilated (25-26).

Signs of the Coming of the Antichrist

Increasing moral decadence, general disasters, wars, plague, and famine will precede the Antichrist's birth. Some traditions anticipate Gog and Magog before his appearance. In other texts he comes with the Goths or with the ten lost tribes (*Sib. Or.* 2.713). These armies are terrible in mien but they are not the armies of the Antichrist himself; rather they portend his coming. One certain sign is the fall of the Roman Empire (cf. 2 Thess 2:6 and Lactantius 7, 15; cf. Jerome *Commentary on Jeremiah* 5). Nations will break away from Rome.

Astrological wonders, with the darkening of the sun and moon, will not be absent (Jerome *Commentary on Isaiah* 6.13).

⁵⁰Usually dated in the 8th or 9th century, but Zervos argues that the material on the Antichrist may belong to an earlier stratum because of the parallels to earlier works, e.g., *Apocalypse of Baruch* and *4 Esdras*.

⁵¹Or *gauridion* which is interesting as *gauroomai* means "to be arrogant." I have searched Oppian's *Halieutica*, but have found no reference to this particular species. I have been told, however, that this fish was used by Jewish persons for soup. If this is so it constitutes a libelous anti-Semitic fiction.

⁵²*Apocalypse of Daniel* 9. Children were often breast-fed until the age of three, thus the Antichrist is presented as a precocious child.

Place of birth

His natal locality is named as Babylon (Jerome *Commentary on Daniel* 4.11.100-104) or Chorizin. He is reared in Bethsaida and rules in Capernaum (cf. Lk 10:13, 15). Adso also says that he is born in Babylon, the root of all evil, a city once glorious and famous, the capital of the Persian kingdom. He will be brought up in Bethsaida and Chorazim, the cities over which the Lord proclaimed, "woe!"⁵³

Physical Appearance

There are numerous descriptions of the physical appearance of the Antichrist. I quote three below.

Gk Apocalypse of John (parallel to *Apoc. of Ezra* 4:29-32)

The appearance of his face is gloomy; the hairs of his hands are sharp as missiles, his eyebrows like those of a wild man, his right eye like the star which rises at dawn and the other like that of a lion; his mouth (is as wide) as one cubit, his feet a span long, his fingers like scythes; the soles of his feet (are) two span; and on his forehead (is) an inscription: "Antichrist." He will be exalted up to heaven, he will descend as far as Hades, performing false apparitions. (*OTP* 1: 568)

Apoc. of Daniel 9:16-27

And he will appear quiet and gentle [*prao-phyles* (B) and *praophaleis* (M); Berger corrects to *prospfiles*] and guileless [M further describes the Antichrist as "downcast" and "prosecuting transgressions"]. The height of his stature (will be) fifteen feet [lit. "ten cubits" of about eight-een inches each]. And the hairs of his head (will reach) as far as his feet. And he (will be) large and t h r e e - c r e s t e d [*τρικροϋθος*; M: "topped with hair"]. And the track of his feet (will be) large. His eyes (will be) like the star which rises in the morning, and his right (eye will be) like a lion's. His lower teeth (will be) iron and his lower jaw diamond. And his right arm (will be) iron and his left copper. And his right hand (will be) four and a

Apocalypse of John 9

The appearance of his face will be gloomy (*ζοφωδες*), the hair of his head will be as sharp as weapons, his eyebrows like a savage man. His right eye will be like the morning star and the other one like a lion's, his mouth will be about one cubit, his teeth a span long, his fingers will be like scythes, the track of his feet two span, and on his forehead is written Antichrist.

⁵³Adso, 45-51; cf. *Apocalypse of Daniel* 7.

half feet (long). (He will be) long-faced, long-nosed, and disorderly. And he also has upon his forehead the letters: A,K,T. And the A signifies: "I deny," the K: "And I completely reject," the T: "The befouled dragon." And the Antichrist will be teaching and being Taught." (*OTP* 1:767-168)

Pertinent to this description I append some quotations from Aristotle's *Physiognomonika* to show that the features cannot be taken at face value but rather are indicative of personal characteristics. To the description of Antichrist's complexion as gloomy we may contrast Aristotle's statement that "a pink-and-white complexion proves a good disposition, when it occurs on a smooth skin" (2.806b). The reference to the hirsute features is important. Aristotle says: "Those with a hairy back are excessively shameless . . ." (6:812b; the philosopher is speaking of animals here). Eyebrows are also significant: "Those with eyebrows that meet are gloomy. . . . Those whose eyebrows fall towards the nose and rise towards the temples are stupid . . ." (6:812b). The condition of the eye denotes certain characteristics: "Those who have flaming eyes are shameless . . ." (6.812b; cf. *Physiologus* 3. 808a). The formation of the lips is a telling feature: "Abusive men have a pendulous upper lip." The digits may offer a clue to temperament: "Those whose toes are curved are shameless, just like creatures which have curved talons" (6.810b).

J. M. Rosenstiehl gives seventeen descriptions of the Antichrist from Rabbinic, Arabic, Syriac, Armenian, and Latin sources. Several body features recur throughout: height, corpulence, head, hair, forehead, neck, mouth, eyes, eyebrows, teeth, ears, nose, hands, arms, fingers, feet, legs, and joints. These features, Rosenstiehl feels, find their origin in Jewish sources, perhaps at Qumran, and have astrological associations. Rosenstiehl also compares the appearance of the Antichrist with the descriptions of Caligula found in Seneca (*De Ira* 3.19), Suetonius (*Caligula* 50), and Pliny (*Natural History* 11.144),⁵⁴ who described him as follows:

He was very tall and extremely pale, with an unshapely body, but very thin neck and legs. His eyes and temples were hollow, his forehead

⁵⁴Rosenstiehl, 45-60.

broad and grim, his hair thin and entirely gone on the top of his head, though his body was hairy. . . . While his face was naturally forbidding and ugly, he purposely made it even more savage, practicing all kinds of terrible and fearsome expressions before a mirror.

Stone and Strugnell further discuss his appearance in the fragments of the Elijah literature.⁵⁵

It is important to realize the purport of these descriptions. In Aristotle's *Physiognomonika*, we see how the ancients associated physical characteristics with temperament and character.

It seems to me that soul and body react on each other; when the character of the soul changes, it changes also the form of the body, and conversely, when the form of the body changes, it changes the character of the soul.⁵⁶

The construction of the physical traits of our Antichrist supports Aristotle's statement: "Ill-proportioned (*asummetroi*) persons are scoundrels."⁵⁷

We may also note Stone's observation that this description has much in common with Jewish physiognomic and chiromantic texts. He sees Ezra as combining "two old traditions, that of the physiognomic literature and that of the Antichrist."⁵⁸

The above descriptions distinguish the Antichrist from the heroes and heroines of Greco-Roman and Jewish-Christian literature. He is a physical monstrosity which lacks any semblance of beauty and proportion (he is acosmic), with limbs designed for torture and destruction rather than elegant manufacture.

Identification

Some thought that the Antichrist would be the devil incarnate. But he was usually conceived as the human agent of the devil (Augustine *De civitate Dei* 20.19).

Nurture, training, and "accomplishments"

His mentor is Satan, who teaches him the way of deceit and gives him power and authority. Moreover, he is schooled by those associated with sorcerers. Adso declares that the Antichrist will have magicians and divines

⁵⁵M. E. Stone and J. Strugnell, eds., *The Books of Elijah* (Missoula: Scholars, 1979), especially fragment 2, the appearance of the Antichrist (27-39), and fragment 5, the Antichrist gathering the people from the diaspora (83-85).

⁵⁶*Physiognomonika* 6.808b.

⁵⁷*Physiognomonika* 6.814a.

⁵⁸M. E. Stone, "The Metamorphosis of Ezra: Jewish Apocalypse and Medieval Vision," *JTS* 33 (1982): 1-18.

who are inspired by the devil and they will verse him in all wickedness and deceit. Evil spirits will lead him and be his constant companions.⁵⁹ The false prophets are also his disciples and messengers. He promulgates false doctrine, persecutes the church and, through his false prophet (the second beast), organizes impious false worship. The false prophet will even inaugurate a false Pentecost.⁶⁰

Accomplishments and Deeds (Past and Future)

He comes in different guises: Nero (*Sib. Or.* 2, 4, 5) or Gog and Magog. He is also identified with historical figures and nations: Assyria, Domitian, Julian. He can also be dragon or beast. Bruno de Segni notes his versatility: "For Antichrist is called the dragon because of the strength and success of deception; and he is called the beast because of his cruelty; and he is also called the false prophet because he pretends to be Christ."⁶¹ Besides, he has the ability to perform signs and wonders (Adso 65).

The Antichrist is a mighty warrior. He conquers Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia. He gathers people from every country of the dispersion, makes them his own, and re-establishes the Jewish kingdom. He will persecute the saints, exalt himself against God, and possess the temple.⁶²

After defeating kings of Libya and Ethiopia the Antichrist will go to the Mount of Olives, declare himself as Christ, and prepare to imitate the Ascension. He will be killed by Christ or Michael. However, according to some traditions, he has a false resurrection, ascension, and pentecost.

His power emanates from his ability to deceive. This deception takes its most arresting and beguiling form in his parody of Christ, which arises from an imaginative interpretation of Rev 13:11 (the beast like a lamb). The contrasts are given by Hippolytus:

⁵⁹Adso, 651-655.

⁶⁰Adso, 64-65; so Pseudo-Methodius; see Bousset, 2-56.

⁶¹Bruno de Segni, *Exposition on the Apocalypse*, PL 165, col. 695; cf. Emerson, 26.

⁶²Hippolytus *De Antichristo* 52, 54; Jerome sees this as the realization of the millennium, the false Christ reigning on earth in a rebuilt Jerusalem (*Commentary on Daniel*, Passim).

Christ	Antichrist
Christ lion because of royalty and glory	Antichrist lion because of tyranny and cruelty
king	king
lamb	outwardly lamb but inwardly wolf
circumcision	circumcision
apostles among nations	false apostles among nations
brings together scattered sheep	brings together scattered people
seal	mark
appeared in human form	appeared in human form
Saviour raised temple of his Body	will raise temple of stone

In various other texts the contrasts appear as follows:

Christ	Antichrist
Jewish	Jewish
conceived by virgin	conceived by virgin
precursor John the Baptist	precursors Elijah and Enoch
Christians are other christs (Origen <i>Against Celsus</i> 6.79)	heretics are other antichrists
miracle worker and exorcist	performs signs and wonders
resurrection	pseudo-resurrection (symbolized by healing of wound, Rev 13:3)
Pentecost	pseudo-Pentecost (fire from heaven, 13:13; breathing spirit into image of beast, 13:15)

This power of imitation and mimetic rivalry is Antichrist's most powerful weapon. Its purpose is to make Antichrist outwardly like Christ but inwardly to deceive Christ. Much of this parody may be derived from the legends about Simon Magus who is represented as a false prophet and claims to be the Christ. Origen states that Christ is the Word but the Antichrist is also the (simulated) word. Christ is truth; the Antichrist, simulated truth. Christ has wisdom; the Antichrist, simulated wisdom. For

every kind of good which Christ does for the edification of humanity, the Antichrist performs similar deeds to lead the saints astray.⁶³

It is also possible to think of his parousia or second coming. As Christ is present in the Eucharist and the Church, and yet still to come at his parousia, similarly the Antichrist is present in aberrant Christians but is to come formally before the parousia of Christ.⁶⁴

Antichrist As Internal Foe(s)

In his discussion on the reconstructed portrait of the adversaries in the Johannine Epistles, R. E. Brown argues that John's opponents constitute a sizeable group or groups who had withdrawn from the Johannine community.⁶⁵ They are characterized as "demonic" antichrists and false prophets. For John it is the "last hour" (1 John 2:18).⁶⁶ The antichrists are "evil heralds" of the eschatological era.⁶⁷ Indeed, they are seen as the embodiment of eschatological iniquity (*anomia*, 2:18, 22; 4:1-5; 3:4-5).⁶⁸ John exhorts the faithful to "conquer" the antichrists (1 John 4:4). One notes the military metaphor found so often (17x) in Revelation. The true Christians are distinguished from the *antichristoi* because they have the true anointing in contrast to the false (1 John 2:20, 27).⁶⁹

In order to describe these secessionists John used imagery from Jewish apocalyptic.⁷⁰ This rich imagery is also consonant with that of Mark 13:22 and its parallels, and 2 Thess 2:1-12.

We note John's emphasis on lying and the reference to the Liar⁷¹

⁶³Origen *Commentariorum serie* 33, PG 13, cols. 1644. 1645.

⁶⁴Cf. Rupert of Deutz, "This is Christ, who shed his own blood. This is Antichrist, who shed other blood" (*On the Apocalypse of John* [Nuremberg, 1526], 377. Arnold of Villanova, *Tractatus de Tempore Antichristi*. "Nam Christus est domus and alius latro, Christus est pastor et alius lupus, Christus custos et alius fur, Christus est sponsus et amicus, alius vero aduler, et inimicus" (Emmerson, 265, n. 7).

⁶⁵See Augustine *In Johannis Epistularum ad Parthos tractatus*, PL 35; R. E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 49-68; R. Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973). This seems to suggest that there is no one prominent, well-known figure, such as Cerinthus (Brown, 67).

⁶⁶One notes that in the Johannine Epistles the Antichrist(s) is (are) to "come," just as in John's Gospel Jesus "is to come" (1:15, 27; 12:13).

⁶⁷Their religious indifference epitomizes and embodies the *anomia* of the final struggle (1 John 3:4).

⁶⁸Brown, 85.

⁶⁹Cf. Rev 7 and 14 for those sealed.

⁷⁰Brown, 100. However, one would hardly expect the term "antichrist" to appear in Jewish literature except in a temporal sense of one who is a precursor of the Anointed One.

⁷¹This is the only biblical text which has the definite article with *pseustēs*.

(1 John 2:22; cf. 2 Thess 2:8-9). In 2 John 7 the "Deceiver" is parallel to the Antichrist (cf. also 2 Thess 2:11). Brown concludes that "the Antichrist," "the Liar," and the "Iniquitous One" may have been current titles for the anticipated opponent(s) of the last times. A combination of all these figures is found in Rev 12, 13, 16, 19, 20.⁷²

Brown thinks that the Johannine school may have coined the term "antichrist" in place of a less vivid word. The tradition of the Great Adversary may have been part of the early Johannine belief, possibly inherited from Judaism.⁷³ Strecker observes that the early Christians knew of the Jewish expectation of one or more false prophets who would oppose the true prophet of Deut 18:15.⁷⁴ Strecker also discusses 4QPsDanA⁷⁵ and 4QTest 231⁷⁶ where after the series of messianic figures there is reference to a "Verflüchter, einer von Belial."⁷⁷

The author of 1 John historicized the apocalyptic struggle while taking an important theological step. He brought common Christian oratory to new dimensions. In doing so he began a catena of identifications of the Antichrist that would have enormous repercussions in the history of the Church. He saw the Antichrist, not as an objective, external foe, either diabolic or political, but identified him with the secessionists. They seem to have been precursors of the great Antichrist who would appear before or at the parousia of Jesus. On this Tertullian says:

In his epistles [John] designates as the chief Antichrists those who deny Christ to have come in the flesh and those who think that Jesus was not the Son of God. Marcion proved to be an example of the former, Ebion of the latter.⁷⁸

The suggestion in 1 John 4:3 seems to be that the evil spirit does not come from the Antichrist, but rather produces him or her. The evil spirit dwells in the secessionists and they play the role of the Antichrist. Thus the

⁷²Brown, 365.

⁷³Ibid., 333.

⁷⁴G. Strecker, "Der Antichrist: Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund von 1 Joh 2, 18.22; 4,3 und 2 Joh 7," in *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature*, ed. T. Baarda et al. (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1988), 247-254.

⁷⁵Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament," *NTS* 20 (1974): 391-394.

⁷⁶Strecker, 250, note 14.

⁷⁷A translation is found in G. Vermès, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3d ed. (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987), 296. Strecker also mentions *Syriac Baruch* 40.1, 2 and *Assumption of Moses* 8:1f and 10:1, but these texts do not specifically mention the Antichrist (250-251).

⁷⁸*De Praescriptionibus adversus haereticos* 33.11. Athanasius sees the Arians as heralds of the Antichrist (*Historia Arianorum* 78. 5, 4; *Letter* 10. 8).

Johannine community “labeled” the “enemy” and created a social distance.⁷⁹

*Tyconius' Concept of the Corpus Diaboli*⁸⁰

John's concept of *antichristoi* within the church gained popularity with the constant “labeling” of “heretics.” Tertullian (*De Praescriptionibus adversus haereticos* 33) equates the Marcionites and the Ebionites with the Antichrist. Lucifer Calaritanus (*De non convenendo cum haereticis*, passim) so names the Arians and Constantius as the Antichrist's precursor. Ambrose (*Exposition of the Gospel of Luke* 10) so calls Arius and Sabellius. Augustine (*Contra Julianum* 1.132) refers to Julian as the “new Antichrist.”

The doctrine of the church as the Body of Christ is well-known (1 Cor 12-14; Rom 12:1-8; Eph 4:1-16), but less familiar is this concept of the Body of the Devil. The idea of the *corpus diaboli* was first clearly enunciated by the lay Donatist theologian Tyconius, who was condemned for his Catholic views by the Donatist Council at Carthage (ca. 380).⁸¹ His chief works comprise *De Bello Intestino Libri Tres*, *Expositiones Diversarum Causarum* (not extant), the indispensable *Liber Regularum* which does survive,⁸² and a commentary on the Apocalypse. We do not possess the latter but large portions of it are found in Beatus of Liébana's *Commentary on the Apocalypse* (ca. 786),⁸³ in Victorinus/Jerome, Primasius, Bede, and the Pseudo-Augustine *Homilies*. Further, Lo Bue has edited the Turin Fragments (Bobbio Codex 62)⁸⁴; the only previous edition of this manuscript was that of the Benedictines of Monte Cassino (*Spicilegium Casinense*, vol. 3).⁸⁵ This was also used by Hahn who

⁷⁹Brown, 496-497. Brown comments further: “If the epistolary author demythologized the Antichrist by seeing an apocalyptic expectation of evil fulfilled in a schism that had wracked the Johannine Community, perhaps the time has come to demythologize further his insight by recognizing what he really teaches—not the advisability of continuing to identify one's Christian opponents as the Antichrist, but the evil of schism and of doctrine division in the Christian community” (366).

⁸⁰Much of this material comes from “The Body of the Devil,” a paper presented to the Catholic Bible Association, in Memphis, TN, August, 1993.

⁸¹On the significance of Tyconius as a lay person, see J. Ratzinger, “Beobachtungen zum Kirchenbegriff des Tyconius im *Liber regularum*, *Revue des études Augustiniennes* 2 (1956): 174-175.

⁸²W. S. Babcock, *Tyconius: The Book of Rules*, Texts and Translations 31, Early Christian Literature Series 7 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989). See S. A. Campos, “Fuentes Literarias de Beato de Liébana,” in *Actas del Simposio para el Estudio de los Códices del Comentario al Apocalipsis de Beato de Liébana* (Madrid: Joyas Bibliográficas, 1978-80), vol. 1; 2:128.

⁸³E. Romero-Pose, ed., *Beatus of Liébana: Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, 2 vols. (Rome: Typis Officinae Polygraphicae, 1985).

⁸⁴F. Lo Bue, *The Turin Fragments of Tyconius' Commentary on Revelation*, Texts and Studies, New Series, ed. by C. H. Dodd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

⁸⁵See G. Kretschmar, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1985), 96, n. 225, on the reconstruction of Tyconius' commentary. See also Campos, 117-162.

quotes Beatus at length.⁸⁶

In contradiction to the Donatist view of a pure, elect church,⁸⁷ Tyconius taught that the church was spread over the earth and comprised both good and evil people. Rauh correctly observes that against the Donatist background this organic (and striking) image of the two parties in conflict belonging to the one body describes the situation of the church better than any abstract formula. The weeds and the wheat grow together.⁸⁸ Both groups, the elect and the rejected, are prefigured in the twins, Jacob and Esau, *in uno corpore sunt ex uno semine* (Rule 3).⁸⁹

In contrast to Augustine, Tyconius recognizes only one city, not two: the city Jerusalem which, at the end of time, will be divided into two parts.⁹⁰ Thus, for Tyconius the Church is bipartite, both the *corpus Christi* and the *corpus diaboli*.⁹¹ Clarification of the concept of *bipartitio* was the goal of Tyconius' exegesis.⁹² Tyconius' work greatly influenced patristic writers, especially commentators on the Apocalypse⁹³ and particularly Augustine.⁹⁴

⁸⁶T. Hahn, *Tyconius-Studien* (Leipzig: Scientia Verlag Aalen, repr. 1971. See also Campos (117-162) who, while using the text of Sander, appends to his article a table of Beatus' sources.

⁸⁷See W.H.C. Frend, *The Donatist Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), 141-168, 315-332. The Donatists paid special attention to their own martyrs, deemed the Roman church to be the *civitas diaboli*, and criticized the union of church and state in the Constantinian era (H. P. Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist im Mittelalter: von Tyconius zum deutschen Symbolismus* [Münster: Aschendorff, 1973]), 104. This spirit was also aggravated by the militant movement of the Circumcelliones. Accompanied by ecclesiastical rigorism, a lively eschatological consciousness was significant for the Donatists. That this church used the OL text may account for the lack of Greek influence in Tyconius.

⁸⁸Rauh, 106. In Tyconius the Antichrist appears only in a veiled way in intermediate time (*ibid.*, 108), but he was an important feature of the eschatological expectation in the Middle Ages. The concept of a continually repeated ethical-religious act of penitence in the heart of the individual strikes at the root of the Donatist ecclesiology. There is a vital difference between ontological and ethical-religious membership of the church. The Antichrist can destroy only the outer aspect of church.

⁸⁹On this duality, see Ratzinger, 179-180.

⁹⁰Whereas Tyconius recognizes the effect of the secular world on the church and sees the church open to converts, yet the pagans are not his focus in his teaching on the Body of the Devil.

⁹¹Although one might be able to discern outwardly the parts belonging to the Corpus Christi, one cannot definitely discern the ethical-spiritual dimension (Rauh 107).

⁹²Nearly all the symbols are ambivalent, e.g., Nineveh is both the rejected city and a figure of the church. This idea of twofold nature of church obtained throughout the Middle Ages.

⁹³See the careful and interesting work of K. B. Steinhauser, *The Apocalypse Commentary of Tyconius: A History of its Reception and Influence* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987).

⁹⁴Concerning the influence of Tyconius, see Maier, 129-171, especially 161-166.

One sees the change in Augustine's thought from *Homily 259*, where Augustine takes a literal interpretation of the millennium (Rev 20:4-6) to *De Civitate Dei* 20-22, where he follows Tyconius in spiritualizing it.⁹⁵

Augustine gives us a direct link between the *corpus diaboli* of Tyconius and his own concept of the city of the devil. In *De Civitate Dei* he discusses the meaning of the Antichrist seated in the temple of God.

Wherefore some are inclined to believe that Antichrist here means not only the prince himself but in some sense his whole body, that is the multitude of men belonging to him as well as himself, their prince; and they think that the Greek is more correctly expressed in Latin not by "sit in the temple of God," but by "sit as the temple of God," as if he were himself the temple of God, that is, the church. So we say, "He sits as a friend," meaning "like a friend," and other expressions of the kind.⁹⁶

Summarizing Tyconius' work presents some difficulty, for his method often takes the form of a catena of sometimes bewildering biblical quotations, which he uses to support his various theses. Let me, however, attempt a summary, based mainly on Rules 1, 2, 4 and 7.⁹⁷

The church is bipartite, that is, it comprises both good and evil people⁹⁸ and has both a good and evil supernatural character, one might say a collective evil.⁹⁹ Tyconius compares it to the human person who has two sides, right and left,¹⁰⁰ and the Jewish body that is both a body of an election and a body of enemies.¹⁰¹ The church, according to Tyconius, is strongly spiritual and eschatological.¹⁰² The State is no longer the opposing power; rather the struggle is internal.

However, Tyconius' important contribution is that he unites world

⁹⁵See *De Doctrina Christiana* 3.30-37, where Augustine summarizes and comments upon Tyconius' Rules.

⁹⁶*De Civitate Dei* 20.19; cf. also his observations on Tyconius in *De Doctrina* 30-37 but especially 32 ("... for that is really no part of the body of Christ which will not be with Him in eternity").

⁹⁷For a discussion of these rules see P. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu'à l'invasion arabe* (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1920, 5:183-184).

⁹⁸Ratzinger, 179-181.

⁹⁹Maier says that we find in Tyconius two concepts which have not been clearly stated in prior ecclesiastical writings, namely, the twin ideas of the city and the body (115).

¹⁰⁰Cf. Monceaux, 183.

¹⁰¹Compare Rule 2: "For the temple is bipartite; and its other part, although it is being constructed with great blocks of stone, will be destroyed and 'not one stone will be left upon another.' Against the continuous coming of that temple we must remain on guard until the church shall depart 'from the midst' of it."

¹⁰²See Ratzinger, 175; Maier, 116.

history and church history,¹⁰³ not from an empirical but from a spiritual point of view. This principle is established with the help of the Hebrew prophets whom Tyconius regards as indispensable for understanding salvation history. The church is not a way of triumph but of suffering and hiddenness.¹⁰⁴ Tyconius has also an eschatological view of the chosen community: it can be compared to the remnant of Israel. It is the beginning of his universalistic theology of history.¹⁰⁵

Indeed, there is a certain trinitarian aspect to the *corpus diaboli* for it has three parts—the dragon, the sea monster and the land monster—and these three are one. Kamlah provides the following table:

Deus	diabolus
Christus	Antichristus
angeli	daemones
	maligni spiritus
civitas Dei	civitas diaboli
Ecclesia	universitas malorum
Jerusalem	Babylon
apostoli, prophetae	
doctores, praedicatores	reges malorum
martyres, virgines	principes malorum
boni	mali
sancti, iusti	reprobi, impii, iniqui
electi	damnandi
salvandi	haeretici, schismatici, hypocritae
fideles	falsi Christiani pagani soweit sie nicht (gentiles) bekehrt Judaei werden.

Curiously Kamlah omits a reference to the Holy Spirit who would be the

¹⁰³This was very important for later writers: e.g., Nicholas of Lyra.

¹⁰⁴Maier, 117.

¹⁰⁵Typology is no abstract concept for Tyconius. It illuminates the “here and now” in the church, the living, historical Body of Christ. Recapitulation signifies especially the bringing together of Type and Antitype. Recapitulation is directed towards the future, confirms the past and also makes it dynamic but not simply a repetition but a moving to a climax, a *consummatio* (Rauh, 106). Salvation history in the positive sense is spiritual union of Christ and his Body, in the negative sense is also valid for body of devil and his leaders.

antithesis to the false prophets.¹⁰⁶

Emmerson gives the following chart:¹⁰⁷

The Trinity

God the Father
God the Son
God the Holy Spirit

The Symbols and the Antitrinity

Dragon/Satan (god of this world)
Seven-headed Beast/Antichrist (son of the devil)
Two-horned Beast/False Prophet (spirit of evil)

The *adversum corpus* is to be separated from the Body of Christ only at the end of time.¹⁰⁸

Ratzinger states that the Antichrist belongs to the church, “Die Völker der Welt werden in der Kirche den Zornwein Gottes trinken, weil die Kirche Christ und Antichrist zugleich umfasst.” We may compare 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3 and 2 John 7 and contrast 2 Thess 2.¹⁰⁹

Both the Head of the Body of Christ and the Head of the Body of the Devil have two Advents.¹¹⁰ One member affects the other; this has been so since the beginning of the world. The evil is ceaselessly renewed as one evil generation gives birth to another. This uncanny circle of continually renewed evil is the *mysterium facinoris*. This is the rule of Satan, the body politic of the devil. Tyconius summarizes Rule 1 (concerning the Body of Christ=the church) as follows:

And so the body, in virtue of its head, is the son of God; and God, in virtue of his body, is the son of man who comes daily by birth and “grows into the holy temple of God.” For the temple is bipartite; and its other part, although it is being constructed with great blocks of stone, will be destroyed and “not one stone will be left upon another. Against the continuous coming of that temple we must remain on guard until the church shall depart “from the midst” of it.¹¹¹

Of vital importance is Tyconius' interpretation of the millennium (Rev 20:4-6). He understands it not as a circumscribed, historical period in

¹⁰⁶Wilhelm Kamlah, *Apokalypse und Geschichtlichtstheologie* (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1935), 57-58; this negative superhuman character is illustrated from the fall of Lucifer portrayed mythologically in Isa 14.

¹⁰⁷Emmerson, 24.

¹⁰⁸We may compare the *Turin Fragments*, # 156: “Antequam discissio fiat, omnes Dei populus reputantur./ Postquam vero discissio fuerit / facta, tunc apparebit qui sit / populus Dei et qui sit diaboli.”

¹⁰⁹Ratzinger, 181; cf. also *Turin Fragments*, # 74: “Non enim, ut aliqui putant, antichristum regem esse novissimum que se dicat Deum, cum rex novissimus unum sit membrorum antichristi, id est discissio diabolici corporis profutura.”

¹¹⁰Kamlah opines that the Apocalypse does not treat of the history of the church but rather the earthly course, that which is always happening. See Hahn, 26-27.

¹¹¹The *corpus diaboli* is at times identified with the body of the harlot (Rev 17-18).

contrast to an eternal condition of perfection. It is the time when Christ exercises his Lordship; the throne is his Incarnation. This kingdom comes to birth through baptism. God rules in his own State. This interpretation of the millennium shows how Tyconius saw in the *Civitas Dei* the realization of Redemption. It goes back to council of God before the beginning of the world. It is accepted by the free choice of human beings. The choice lies in becoming part of Christ in his suffering, death, and resurrection. This is God's concept of the church from the beginning, when God chose Abraham, in whom the true church is conceived. Justification is now by faith and love, not by the Law. The means of salvation is the Spirit through the mediation of Christ.¹¹² The Church is like a body of a child which grows from itself, not through outside source.¹¹³

There are, however, differences between the two bodies, that of Christ and of the Devil: (1) The *corpus diaboli* has no mediator; (2) it is never at peace; (3) it has no posterity, no hope of eternal bliss; (4) it can hope for no resurrection.¹¹⁴

*Beatus of Liébana*¹¹⁵

Beatus of Liébana (Spain; 730-798) wrote a long Latin commentary on the Apocalypse, with abundant source material. Many of the extant manuscripts of his popular commentary are illuminated.¹¹⁶

Beatus' theology of the bipartite church, heavily influenced by Tyconius, is found throughout his text. I choose four examples.

(1) In his discussion of Jezebel (Rev 2:20) Beatus says that the church is a saintly person but also has intimacy with a prostitute. There are two sides, right and left, to a human body and two sides to the church. The body has healthy and sick members (organs). The healthy ones are the saints but

¹¹²Ratzinger, 177-179.

¹¹³Hahn, 27-36.

¹¹⁴Cf. Beatus, 1:150. Tyconius' *Turin Fragments* cover only Apoc 2:20-4:1 and 7:16-12:6. We observe firstly—and with surprise—that, although the argument of the text is very close to that of the *Book of Rules*, the actual phrase *corpus diaboli* occurs only once in Lo Bue's edition. Second, Hahn (42-44) observes the idea of redemption is remarkably different from Rule III. It is less Pauline, more ecclesiastical, emphasizes more the wrath of God and dwells on the importance of postbaptismal repentance, which is seen to be a type of martyrdom. It is this penitence which distinguishes the true Christians from the false. Third, there is abundant similarity in symbolism.

¹¹⁵For Beatus' sources, see Campos, 120-121; H. L. Ramsay, "Le Commentaire de l'Apocalypse par Beatus de Liébana," *Revue d'Histoire et Littérature Religieuses* 7 (1902): 427; Hahn, 10-11; and W. Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 56-72.

¹¹⁶Beatus of Liébana, *Beati Apocalypsin libri duodecimi*, ed. E. Romero-Pose, 2 vols. (Rome: Typis Officinae Polygraphicae, 1985).

the weak ones are the sinners.

As there are sick limbs in a person in such a way that also the healthy ones suffer pain, and then when the sores become external the person appears as a sick person [lit. the person is unmasked by sickness], so it is also with wicked persons, who are the left side, thus they are like evil humours in the sound organs of the church, who are the right side. As you understand this person as an individual, so you can understand him in a generic sense to be one church, concerning which he says, TO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH WRITE. Thus also the angel <and the members> [of the church] are bipartite. The universal is hidden in the particular.¹¹⁷

(2) In his discussion of the ten horns Beatus explains that the “beast” is the generic name for what is contrary to the Lamb. But this symbol must be interpreted according to the context.

For sometimes he calls the devil the beast: sometimes his body which is the unfaithful, that is, those without baptism; sometimes one of the heads of the same beast, which is supposed to be dead, rose, which is an imitation of the true faith, that is, wicked Christians within the church; sometimes he calls only the leaders the beast, that is, the bishops or priests who live in carnal fashion within the church: he calls all these members the one body of the devil.¹¹⁸

(3) Beatus' most detailed explanation of the Body of the Devil appears in two passages of the *Summa Dicendorum*. Here Beatus comments on the three unclean spirits which proceed from the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the pseudoprophet. He interprets the dragon as the devil; the beast as the Body of the Devil, that is, evil people, false prophets, leaders, priests, evil preachers. The second beast is the false prophets; all these have one spirit like a toad. Beatus then develops the theme beyond Tyconius. The false prophet has four limbs or organs (*membra*) as follows: (a) The heretics, who chose their own beliefs according to their own judgment (or whims); (b) the schismatics, who possesses the same religiosity, the same cult, the same rites as others but are not of one spirit with the church because they believe themselves superior to others for indulging in more fasting, vigils, etc.; (c) the superstitious person who blindly adheres to religious rules (the ecstatic or prophet) and indulges in supererogatory works and courts self-imposed martyrdom,¹¹⁹ identified by Beatus with the Circumcel-liones, who are itinerant and form no community;¹²⁰ (d) the hypocrites. Beatus calls these

¹¹⁷Beatus, 1:341.

¹¹⁸Beatus, 2:123-124.

¹¹⁹See W.F.C. Frend, *Donatist Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), 175. “Martyrdom” sometimes included suicide.

¹²⁰Frend dates the beginning of their movement about A.D. 340 and sees them as a revolutionary fringe of Donatism (171), the modern day “terrorists.”

four classes "false prophets." They do not form part of the episcopate, the clerics, the religious orders, or the penitents, but they live as they please, forming their own beliefs and mores not derived from the authority of Scripture or the church. They are the thieves and robbers who do not enter by the door of the sheepfold. They are the limbs of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophets and are polluted like toads.¹²¹

(4) In interpreting the harlot seated upon the beast, Beatus relates the entire symbolism to the Body of the Devil:

AND THE WOMAN WAS CLOTHED IN PURPLE AND SCARLET AND ADORNED WITH GOLD AND PRECIOUS STONES AND PEARLS, that is, she is revealed adorned with every seduction of the semblance of truth, for externally she appears to be Christianity.¹²²

This, therefore, is briefly Beatus' interpretation of the collective body of the Antichrist.

Sociological and Anthropological Approach

As to sociological and anthropological aspects of the question, I can only suggest further research which would consider the following.

(1) The projection of hate on to the individual figure of the Antichrist as important for distancing the enemy, for social cohesion of the opposing group, for the shaming of the foe, perhaps as a deterrent to those who might be tempted to "swap sides," as a burlesque for release of emotion, and providing features for use in an illiterate society. Unfortunately, this also presents an egregious example of anti-Semitism.

(2) The mythic element, using Ian Barbour's theory of myth,¹²³ provides a basic vision of reality "out there"; informs people about their identity and destiny; engenders the hope of a saving power; and provides patterns for human behavior.

(3) The labeling of heretics as antichrists may be a form of catharsis; polarizes good and evil; and graphically portrays the lethal consequence of the actions of the Antichrist and his followers.

(4) The collective Antichrist explains the presence of the internal foe (always more fearful than the external one); and provides internal boundaries.

Tyconius' nonliteral interpretation of the text of the Apocalypse, especially of Rev 20:4-6, radically changed the eschatological outlook of many in the early church, and thus transformed the spirit of community

¹²¹Another passage (2.246) also identifies the dragon with the devil and the (sea) beast with wicked people, the body of the devil, but the second (land) beast is not identified with the four classes discussed above but with the false prophets who are the priests.

¹²²Beatus, 2:169-170.

¹²³I. Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms* (New York: Harper and Harper, 1974).

within the church. It was to be an inclusive, not exclusive, body. Chiliasm became the exception rather than the rule.¹²⁴

With the bipartite church as the internal enemy, Rome is converted into an external foe.¹²⁵ The internal critic or the prophet in his or her native country is more violently threatened than an external enemy. Hence, Tyconius and those who followed his hermeneutic inveighed vehemently against the hypocrites, false prophets, simonists, schismatics, etc., within their community. However, added to these are the superhuman elements. The enemies become diabolically inspired. Demon and deliverance therefrom are convenient ways of exonerating oneself from moral responsibility and avoiding personal criticism.

(5) The body is used as a simile and/or metaphor of orderly, harmonious and integrated society.¹²⁶ We may compare Seneca *Epistle* 95.52:

All that you behold, that which comprises both god and man, is one—we are the parts of one great body. Nature produced us related to one another, since she created us from the same source and to the same end.

and Marcus Aurelius *Meditationes* 2.1; 7.13:

The principle which obtains in single organisms with regard to the limbs of the body applies also in separate beings to rational things constituted to work in conjunction.

The body of the devil is used of a society which is depraved, contentious, and inimical to well-being. It is not a purely human society but one which bears a supernatural character.

Mimetic Rivalry

The whole concept of *corpus diaboli/corpus Christi* shows the power of mimetic rivalry.¹²⁷ The *corpus diaboli* in every point tries to mimic and compete with the true church. The culprits are seen to ape both God and his Christ and also the true officers and people of the accepted community. The land beast is a parody of the Lamb (Rev 13). There is a diabolical trinity.¹²⁸ What is true of the head is true of the members; so the members engage in

¹²⁴See Rule 4 and Maier, 117-125; also see John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975).

¹²⁵Tyconius was, of course, reproaching the Donatists and Beatus the adoptionists.

¹²⁶Compare the fable of Menenius Agrippa recorded in Livy *History* 2.32 and Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Antiquities of Rome* 6.86.

¹²⁷See R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992), 19-24.

¹²⁸Rauh, 110.

mimetic rivalry.¹²⁹ The *corpus diaboli* exists *secundum voluntatem*; what joins the members to the head is their *imitatio*, which holds them together, not as physical but as spiritual children *per opera imitando*.¹³⁰

Characteristic of the Tyconian school is the idea that the personal Antichrist comes through imitation: as the son of the devil *non per naturam, sed imitationem*, as the human receptacle of Satanic will. Under such an aspect Satan and the Antichrist are one, *Diabolus ab homine suo non separatur, nec homo, in quo diabolus non est, potest dicere: Ero similis Altissimo*.¹³¹ But the Antichrist is not the incarnation of Satan in the thought of Tyconius. Only in his *Commentary on Revelation* does Tyconius introduce a personal Antichrist momentarily on the scene.¹³² This mimetic rivalry leads to idolatry, economic sanctions and murder.¹³³

However, above all, in the body of the Antichrist we have the idea of collective, vertical, generational, and all-pervasive evil. This concept shaped thinking throughout the ages and perhaps continues yet today.

Conclusion

We have covered not a little ground in our investigation of the Antichrist. We saw him as a human individual, opponent of God in 2 Thessalonians. He appeared as a horrendous theriomorphic symbol in Revelation 12 and 13. This symbol owes much to mythology, divination, and physiognomy and presented the Antichrist as a composite, grotesque monster which would inspire terror into the hearers of the Apocalypse. Gradually as a form of negative labeling, a whole life of the Antichrist developed and a photographic caricature of him as a malformed creature published his moral turpitude. Finally we saw him as a collective figure, first, in the opponents mentioned in the Johannine Epistles, and then, through Tyconius' theory of the Body of the Devil opposing the Body of Christ, as the weeds, the faithless Christians, among the wheat, the faithful, within the very body of the church. The complex figure of the Antichrist should inspire us to pray for the Holy Spirit's gift of discernment.

¹²⁹Hammerton-Kelly sees this as the sin of Adam and Eve.

¹³⁰Rauh, 110-111. Cf. *Beatus*, 9.2.20.

¹³¹Tyconius *Book of Rules*, Rule VII (Babcock, 126).

¹³²Rauh, 115. Rauh also points out the frequent reference to simony (118).

¹³³There may also be an element of the scapegoat complex; see S. B. Perera, *Scapegoat Complex* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1986).