

THE ANTICHRIST

The malevolent figure of the Antichrist endures in modern culture, whether religious or secular; and the spectral shadow he has cast over the ages continues to exert a strong and powerful fascination. Philip C. Almond tells the story of the son of Satan from his early beginnings to the present day, and explores this false Messiah in theology, literature, and the history of ideas. Discussing the origins of the malign being who at different times was cursed as Belial, Nero, or Damien, the author reveals how Christianity in both East and West has imagined this incarnation of absolute evil destined to appear at the end of time. For the better part of the last 2,000 years, Almond suggests, the human battle between right and wrong has been envisaged as a mighty cosmic duel between good and its opposite, culminating in an epic final showdown between Christ and his deadly arch-nemesis.

PHILIP C. ALMOND is Professorial Research Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Queensland. His many books in the fields of religion and intellectual history include *God: A New Biography* (2018), *Afterlife: A History of Life after Death* (2016), *The Devil: A New Biography* (2014), *The Lancashire Witches* (2012), *England's First Demonologist* (2011), *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), and *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England* (Cambridge University Press, 1994). Among other languages, his work has been translated into Catalan, Dutch, German, Hungarian, and Polish.

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‘An ambitious untangling of a host of different traditions and stories – all super-heated by religious controversy – *The Antichrist* succeeds triumphantly in reducing them to calm intelligibility. This is a major feat, not only of scholarship, but also of reflection, planning and writing. I was not previously aware of many of the complexities of the story, or that so much intellectual activity had been devoted to defining and elaborating upon the characteristics and “life” of the Antichrist specifically. The biography format is a good way to explore this tradition. An accessible account will be very valuable to scholars who want to know more about the Antichrist, as well as to students and the general reader. Almond’s book combines solid research with a readable and lively account.’

Marion Gibson, Professor of Renaissance and Magical Literatures, University of Exeter, author of *Rediscovering Renaissance Witchcraft* and of *Witchcraft: The Basics*

‘Philip Almond’s remarkable new book – a companion piece to his earlier work on the Devil – is clearly and vividly written. Giving full attention to previous ideas about the Antichrist, especially those of Bernard McGinn, the author looks at the subject differently and originally in a way that meshes the topical and the chronological. He clearly sets forth the fundamental dichotomy between the Antichrist as a real, historical person and the Antichrist as a metaphor for human evil. Both these interpretations appear in different forms throughout the history of Christianity; and although the metaphorical dominates contemporary theology, even today there are many for whom the metaphorical is not the only view. The fuzziness of the concept makes it particularly hard to trace historically, but Almond has done a fine job here. He also successfully relates his topic to broader intellectual and social changes. In all, the book is an advance in both theological and popular understanding, and I recommend it warmly.’

Jeffrey Burton Russell, Professor Emeritus of History, University of California, Santa Barbara; author of *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* and of *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence*

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A NEW BIOGRAPHY

PHILIP C. ALMOND
University of Queensland



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