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.

‘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***
THE ANTICHRIST
A NEW BIOGRAPHY

PHILIP C. ALMOND
University of Queensland
To Jenna
# CONTENTS

*List of Plates*  
*Acknowledgements*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prologue</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 The Origins of the Antichrist</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial Moments</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Life of the Antichrist</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The Antichrist’ Arrives</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eschatology and the Antichrist</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Man of Lawlessness and the Son of Perdition</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dragon and the Beasts</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False Prophets, Messiahs, and a World Deceiver</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Eschatological Tyrant</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 The Story Begins</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irenaean Innovations</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variations on an Irenaean Theme</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nero and the Double Antichrists</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Son of Satan?</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To See Him Was to Know Him</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 The Antichrist, East and West</strong></td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Antichrist Within</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Antichrist, Then and Now!</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contents

The Antichrist, Immanent and Imminent 91
Simon, the Magical Antichrist 100
The Last World Emperor 104
Gog and Magog 112
In the Meantime! 120

4 Antichrists, Present and Future 126
Muhammad the Antichrist 126
Al-Dajjal, the Deceiver 132
Armilus, the Jewish Antichrist 139
The Antichrist of Roger de Hoveden 142
Apocalypse Maybe? 145
Sexy Beast 153
Magnus Antichristus 159

5 Of Prophets, Priests, and Kings 165
Antichrists, Regal and Papal 165
The Antichrist Mysticus 174
Mystical Prophets and an Angelic Pope 183
The Radical Antichrist 190

6 The Antichrist Divided 201
The Return of Adso’s Antichrist 201
The Magisterial Antichrist 208
Revisiting the Book of Revelation 219
The Empire Strikes Back 224
The Antichrist of the Radical Reformation 229

7 Antichrists – Papal, Philosophical, Imperial 236
The ‘Scientific’ Antichrist 236
Sceptics and Believers 244
Contents

French Antichrists 252
Back to the Futurists 264
Deconstructing the Antichrist 270
The Floating Signifier 274

Epilogue  A Brief Meditation on History 285

Bibliography 291
Index 309

The colour plate section can be found between pp. 144 and 145
PLATES


2. *St Michael killing the dragon*, Lieferinxe, Josse (Master of St Sebastian) (fl. 1493–1508) / Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon, France / Bridgeman Images (XIR167578).

3. *Seven-headed serpent from the Book of Revelation*, from the Luther Bible, c. 1530 (coloured woodcut), German School (sixteenth century) / Bible Society, London, UK / Bridgeman Images (BAL34274).


5. *The Antichrist at the gates of Jerusalem*. The History Collection / Alamy (J4T2HD).

6. *Antiochus Epiphanes IV and his army before Jerusalem*. Ms 728/312 fol. 301 v, Antiochus Epiphanes IV Seleucid king of Syria (175–163 BC) and his army before Jerusalem, and the pillage of the Jewish temple, French edition of original written by Jean de Courcy (c. 1350–1431) (vellum) (detail of 71878), French School (fifteenth century) / Musée Condé, Chantilly, France / Bridgeman Images (CND291656).
List of Plates

7  The fall of Simon Magus, from ‘La Chronique de Nuremberg’ by Hartmann Schedel, Nürnberg, 1492 (colour woodcut), German School (fifteenth century) / Bibliothèque Mazarine, Paris, France / Archives Charmet / Bridgeman Images (BMR163356).

8  Saint Peter and Simon Magus, by Benozzo Gozzoli (1420–1497) / Alamy (CTWW5E).

9  Antichrist riding Leviathan, Cod. Guelf. 1 Gud. lat. 42 r, from ‘Liber Floridus’ by Lambert de Saint-Omer c. 1120 (vellum), French School (twelfth century) / Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Germany / Prismatic Pictures / Bridgeman Images (DGC954839).


11  St Michael vanquishes the Antichrist, Church of Santa Maria del Pi, Barcelona, 1455, Jaume Huguet (1412–92) / Alamy (EBAE73).

12  Birth of the Antichrist, Hildegard, Scivias, 3.11, Eibingen, MS 1, fol. 214 v (copy of Wiesbaden, Hessische Landesbibliothek, MS 1), Vision of the Last Days (photo: after Scivias, CCCM 43A, by permission of Brepols Publishers).

13  The fall of the Antichrist, Retablo de la Leyenda de San Miguel – Detalle de la Caida del Anticristo – Hacia 1440 – Temple/Tabla – NP 1332 – Gotico español – Conjunto 10139 y 10146. Author: Master
List of Plates

of Arguis (fifteenth century). Location: Museo del Prado – Pintura, Madrid, Spain / Alamy (P2Y3TG).

14 The birth of the Antichrist from a dying woman via a Caesarean operation, reproduction, 1933, of a woodcut, 1475 / Wellcome Library (no. 16038i).

15 On the birth of the Antichrist, 1498 / Wellcome Collection (CC BY).

16 The seven-headed-beast coming from the sea, 1360–70 (fresco), Menabuoi, Giusto di Giovanni de’ (d. 1393) / Padua baptistery, Padua, Italy / Alinari / Bridgeman Images (AL1208415).

17 Miniature of Pope John XXII, Vaticinia de Pontificibus. Italy, Central (Florence); second quarter of the fifteenth century. Source: Harley 1340, f. 5. / Alamy (J8GO4A).

18 Piramid papistique. Satiric representation of the Roman Church hierarchy as the Serpent of Hell. Protestant anti-papist flyer, Holland, sixteenth century / Alamy (JKTY3X).

19 Sermon and deeds of the Antichrist from Last Judgment cycle, 1499–1504 (fresco), Signorelli, Luca (c. 1450–1523) / Orvieto cathedral, Italy / De Agostini Picture Library / S. Vannini / Bridgeman Images (DGA911867).

20 Sermon and deeds of the Antichrist from Last Judgment cycle (detail), 1499–1504 (fresco), Signorelli, Luca (c. 1450–1523) / Orvieto cathedral, Italy / De Agostini Picture Library / S. Vannini / Bridgeman Images (DGA911868).

21 Sermon and deeds of the Antichrist from Last Judgment cycle (detail), 1499–1504 (fresco), Signorelli, Luca (c. 1450–1523) / Orvieto cathedral, Italy /
List of Plates

De Agostini Picture Library / S. Vannini / Bridgeman Images (DGA911881).

22 Sermon and deeds of the Antichrist from Last Judgment cycle (detail), 1499–1504 (fresco), Signorelli, Luca (c. 1450–1523) / Orvieto cathedral, Italy / De Agostini Picture Library / S. Vannini / Bridgeman Images (DGA911867).

23 Sermon and deeds of the Antichrist from Last Judgment cycle (detail), 1499–1504 (fresco), Signorelli, Luca (c. 1450–1523) / Orvieto cathedral, Italy / De Agostini Picture Library / S. Vannini / Bridgeman Images (DGA911867).

24 Sermon and deeds of the Antichrist from Last Judgment cycle (detail), 1499–1504 (fresco), Signorelli, Luca (c. 1450–1523) / Orvieto cathedral, Italy / De Agostini Picture Library / S. Vannini / Bridgeman Images (DGA911867).

25 Sermon and deeds of the Antichrist from Last Judgment cycle (detail), 1499–1504 (fresco), Signorelli, Luca (c. 1450–1523) / Orvieto cathedral, Italy / De Agostini Picture Library / S. Vannini / Bridgeman Images (DGA911867).

26 Thomas Murner as cat, Emser as goat, Pope Leo X as antichrist, Johannes Eck as dog, Lempp as pig, woodcut, Nuremberg, c. 1520, private collection / Alamy (A7WBBP).

27 The Whore of Babylon, from the Luther Bible, c. 1530 (coloured woodcut), German School (sixteenth century) / Bible Society, London, UK / Bridgeman Images (BAL 12732).

28 ‘The Beast as described in the Revelations’, hand-coloured etching by Thomas Rowlandson
List of Plates

(1757–1827). English artist and caricaturist. Dated 1808 / Alamy (F7P672).


This book was written in the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Queensland in Australia. For the past decade, this institute and its predecessor, the Centre for the History of European Discourses, have provided a congenial, stimulating, and, more often than one can hope to expect, an exciting context in which to work. For this I am indebted in particular to my friends and colleagues Professor Peter Harrison, the Director of the Institute, Emeritus Professor Peter Cryle, Emeritus Professor Ian Hunter, and Emeritus Professor Fred D’Agostino. They have all given of their time to talk with me on many occasions. I am grateful also to the many postdoctoral fellows and other research fellows of the Institute, all of whose dedication to their work has provided so much encouragement to my own.

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xv
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