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**A Dialogue on Disaster: Antichrists in Jewish and Christian
Apocalypses and their Medieval Recensions**

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This paper examines textual and iconographic representations of antichrist personae in medieval Christian and Jewish manuscripts. Through a common language of polemics, Christians and Jews conflated antichrist personae to represent a more generalized category of apocalyptic antagonist that reflected the most significant temptations and threats to each respective religious community. As will be argued here, the greatest temptation and threat for Christians and Jews alike were those posed by members of the other religious group.¹

The Johannine Apocalypse and the *Sefer Zerubbabel* are Jewish apocalypses that are believed to have been written in the aftermath of cataclysmic socio-political upheavals in which Jews found themselves subject to foreign domination and in hope of salvation.² The texts follow a similar storyline and share characters and tropes found in other Jewish apocalypses which proliferated in the Hellenistic and the later Roman and Christian empires.³ Both depict angelic messengers who reveal the coming of the end of one era and the beginning of a final messianic era marked, most notably, by temptations and persecutions of the faithful (executed by a series succeeding rulers and their henchmen), and a final battle between good and evil (the Messiah and his forces against anti-messiahs, or antichrists).

The Johannine Apocalypse would go on to become the standard apocalypse in the Christian tradition and the *Sefer Zerubbabel* would become one of the most influential Jewish apocalypses of the medieval

1 I would like to thank the American Academy for Jewish Research, the University of New Mexico Regents, the University of New Mexico Feminist Research Institute, and the University of New Mexico History Graduate Student Association for generously funding research incorporated in the present article. I also would like to thank the generous fellowships provided by the Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Foundation and the L. Dudley Phillips estate, which have facilitated the writing of the present article.

2 Portier-Young, "Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," 160, notes that historical apocalypses—a sub-category that would include John's Apocalypse and the *Sefer Zerubbabel*—were borne out of similar situational contexts of persecution.

3 The Christian "empire" refers to the joining of religio-political authority and power in both the Holy Roman Empire and the more generalized Christendom.

era.⁴ Yet, even as the religious identities of the Christian and Jewish communities became increasingly delineated during the course of the high Middle Ages, the commonalities between Christian and Jewish apocalyptic literature continued to develop. This paper examines the textual references to, and images of, anti-messiah, or antichrist, personae found within a sampling of Northern European Hebrew and Latin manuscripts containing the Johannine Apocalypse and the *Sefer Zerubbabel*, respectively, as a preliminary exploration of their interrelated development. Through a common language of polemics, medieval Christians and Jews conflated antichrist personae to represent a more generalized category of apocalyptic antagonist that suited their own context—specifically, the temptations and threats each perceived as most imminent. As will be argued here, the most pressing temptations and threats for each respective religious community were those posed by members of the other.

By most accounts, the Apocalypse is believed to have been the work of an otherwise unknown first-century Jewish-Christian—John—who wrote his text on the island of Patmos, during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (81-96 C.E.). Based on claims that the author of the text was none other than John the Evangelist,⁵ the Apocalypse was finally included as the last book in the Catholic Canon in 419 at the Synod of Carthage.⁶ Philological arguments suggesting that the writer of the Gospel of John was not in fact the same as that of the Johannine Apocalypse have since come to dominate consensus opinion, yet the dating remains largely uncontested.⁷ One reason for this is the principle of *ex eventu* prophecy, or the recognition that authors of apocalypses commonly presented historical events that had already occurred as prophetic accounts of those yet to transpire.⁸ Based on this principle, because the earliest copies of

4 Himmelfarb, “Sefer Zerubbabel,” 67.

5 Slater, “Dating the Apocalypse,” 253.

6 McDonald and Sanders, *Canon Debate*, Appendix D-2, n19.

7 Pagels, *Revelations*, 2-3.

8 See Grayson and Lambert, “Akkadian Prophecies,” 7-30.

the Apocalypse date to the second century, and because there appear to be striking similarities between the author's literary stylings and the lived reality of late first-century Jewish-Christians, commentators have read some of John's alleged prognostications as descriptions of events during the so-called First Jewish War (66-70 C.E.), such as the devastation of the Jewish community in the Levant, the sacking of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the Second Temple.⁹ Scholars also believe they are able to read allusions to specific individuals into the author's depictions of the chief persecutors of the faithful.¹⁰ This is no easy task as there are numerous antagonists in this text, including ravenous locusts,¹¹ frogs,¹² Gog and Magog,¹³ the rabble-rousing woman of Thyatira, Jezebel,¹⁴ the whore, Babylon the Great,¹⁵ a dragon,¹⁶ a seven-headed beast,¹⁷ a secondary beast,¹⁸ and an unnamed man who spreads deceit.¹⁹ Even more problematic, the features of these antagonists often overlap. Jezebel and Babylon, for example, both incite lust and come to their demise after being violently gang raped²⁰; Jezebel and the unnamed man of deceit are both depicted as false prophets²¹; it is sometimes unclear if the roles

9 See Slater, "Dating the Apocalypse," 252-58, for a contrarian position that John wrote before the destruction of the Temple, around 68-70 C.E.

10 Slater, "Dating the Apocalypse." 252-54.

11 Apoc. 9:3-11.

12 Apoc. 16:13-14.

13 Apoc. 20:8.

14 Apoc. 2:20-2.

15 Apoc. 17-18; 19:2.

16 Apoc. 12:3-13:4; 20:2.

17 Apoc. 13:1-10; 17:3, 7-8, 11-12, 16.

18 Apoc. 13:11-18.

19 Apoc. 19:20.

20 See Selvidge, "Powerful and Powerless Women," 159-61, 164. See also Glancy and Moore, "How Typical," 568, who conclude that sexual violence is envisioned for Babylon the Great, though they do not mention the similar treatment of Jezebel.

21 Apoc. 2:20; 19:20.

of the two beasts are synonymous or merely complimentary in instances where descriptive adjectives—such as “seven headed”—are lacking and the unidentified beast’s roles of forcing idolatry through iconography, emitting foul, frog-like spirits, and spreading lies, could reasonably be applied to either;²² and, in further conflation, the secondary beast is said to have spoken in the manner of a dragon and is depicted as marking individuals with the first beast’s sign in the same way the man of deceit would later on.²³

Overlap withstanding, scholars have commonly interpreted each antagonist as some specific element of vice found in the empire. The persona Jezebel, for instance, might be understood as a derogatory characterization of either temple prostitutes and/or vestal virgins who, rather than serving as chaste oracles, utter false prophecy and seduce men from right religion. The secondary beast who only permits those with his mark to buy and sell and, along with the opulence of the whore, represents the greed and capitalism of the empire.²⁴ The seven-headed beast is symbolic of some combination of seven Roman emperors thought to range from either Julius Caesar (d. 44 B.C.E.), Augustus (27 B.C.E.-14 C.E.) or Caligula (37-41 C.E.) to Domitian (81-96 C.E.), each of whom had forced the imperial cult on their subjects.²⁵ Babylon the Great is none other than the Roman Empire, or its capital city, who proffered power and prestige.²⁶ The unnamed man of deceit is the solitary embodiment of the multiple antichrists mentioned in the Epistles whose teaching, like that of the many philosophers and religious sectarians in Rome, amounted to heretical doctrine.²⁷ And the dragon is intertextually identified as

22 See Apoc. 15:2; 16:13; 19:19-20.

23 Apoc. 13:11; 19:20.

24 See Bauckham, *The Theology*, 35-9; Néstor Miguez, “Apocalyptic and the Economy,” 250-62.

25 See Lupieri, *A Commentary*, 201-04; Pagels, *Revelations*, 16-19, 32-33.

26 See Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical*, 68-70; Lupieri, *A Commentary*, 224-25; Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 191-97; and, Pagels, *Revelations*, 34.

27 See Emerson, *Antichrist*, 36-9, 45-6, 62-3, 74-7; McGinn, *Antichrist*, 33-56.

both a serpent—an allusion to the serpent in the Garden of Eden of Genesis—and the Satan of Job, the grand architect who eternally challenges God and tempts those who would follow Him.²⁸

To presume to know with surety which specific individuals or entities John intended to represent through his characterization of antagonists is problematic, to say the least. As Thomas B. Slater has pointed out, if the seven-headed beast were to represent those emperors who had insisted on imperial worship, the numbers would need to be fudged to excuse lesser-known emperors Galba (68-69 C.E.), Otho (69 C.E.), and Vitellius (69 C.E.) to enable a plausible interpretation of Domitian as the last emperor to rule before the coming of the new and final era.²⁹ Even so, relating the enemies of the faithful to various elements of the Roman empire is suggested by John's use of Babylon the Great as a prominent antagonist. The literary trope is part of a rich tradition found in Jewish biblical and post-biblical texts in which the faithful are cautioned against succumbing to pressures to assimilate to the cultures of the empires that had conquered them and, in the process, abandoning God in favor of the allure of fleeting creature comforts—such as: tasty foods, a heavy purse, or a casual tryst.³⁰

Such a collaboration of evil is iterated time and again within the biblical text as well as in the iconographic program in medieval manuscripts. In John's Apocalypse, this concept is evident when the dragon is said to have given his authority to the seven-headed beast so that the whole earth would worship him; when the secondary beast is said to exercise "all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast . . ."; and when the seven-headed beast is said to carry Babylon the Great and parade her before the nations that they may lust after her.³¹ In illuminated manuscripts dating from the central through

29 Slater, "Dating the Apocalypse," 253.

30 See, for example, Hos. 4:10-15, 9:1; Isa. 1:21; Jer. 1:20, 3:1; Ezek. 23.

31 Apoc. 13:4, 12; 17:7.

late Middle Ages and originating in Northern Europe, the relationship between apocalyptic antagonists is underscored by depictions of physical contact which aligns antichrist personae beyond what the biblical text suggests. Examples of this are found in depictions of hand—or, rather, paw-claw touching—between the dragon and beast to symbolize the transference of power from the former to the latter. In Apocalypse 13:1-2, John relates that he “saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads; and on its horns were ten diadems . . . And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority,” but without mentioning any contact (*see Illustrations figure 1*).³² And, physical association is reinforced by the illuminators’ employment of similar poses for different personae as an indication that they performed the same actions—such as images depicting both beasts seated in an upright position like a human, preaching to a crowd of followers and effectively functioning to lead them astray (*see Illustrations figures 2 and 3*).³³

Yet, the clearest example of association is found in the conflation of anti-messiah, or antichrist, personae. This can be seen in depictions of the secondary beast figured as a being with the face of a human, adorned as a king, with a crown and wearing chain mail (*see Illustrations figure 4*).³⁴ Not only does this presentation prove a creative addition to the biblical description of the beast, it also bears striking similarity to standardized iconographic representations of other apocalyptic provocateurs—the savage locusts, which John described as “horses equipped for battle. On their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, their hair like women’s hair, . . . they had scales like iron breastplates . . .” (Apoc. 9:7, 9) (*see Illustrations figure 5*).³⁵ An even greater example of conflation may be seen when the secondary beast is portrayed as seated on waters and carried by the seven-headed beast in

32 See Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Auct. D. 4. 14, p. 34.

33 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Tanner 184, p. 24, 28.

34 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Auct. D. 4. 14, p. 28.

35 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Auct. D. 4. 14, p. 24.

a stance described in the biblical text as belonging to Babylon the Great: “Come, I will show you the judgement of the great whore who is seated on many waters . . . a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns . . .” (Apoc. 17: 1-3) (see *Illustrations figures 6, 7, and 8*).³⁶ And, when both beasts are depicted as emitting “foul spirits like frogs” from their mouths in contrast to the explicit statement in the Apocalypse that these creatures issued forth from “the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet.” (Apoc. 16:13) (see *Illustrations figure 9*).³⁷

The concept that each of the antagonists is related to the others, united in efforts to corrupt the faithful through sex, money, or power calls into question the individuation of anti-messianic, or antichrist, personae that some modern readers have imposed on the text.³⁸ The amalgam of evil in these medieval manuscripts suggests that commissioners and illuminators may have, at times, been more interested in distinguishing between benevolent and malevolent forces than in identifying specific individuals as harbingers of the End.³⁹ Hindsight reveals that doing so afforded each generation the possibility of interpreting John’s Apocalypse as referring to their own time and place rather than to first-century Roman Empire. As many scholars have shown, this interpretive freedom had especially negative consequences for Jews who, by the polemical turn of the long twelfth century, were increasingly associated with the vices of the apocalyptic antagonists viewed as threats to Christendom.⁴⁰

36 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Tanner 184, p. 26, contra the images on pp. 46 and 47.

37 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Auct. D. 4. 14, p. 44.

38 See especially McGinn, *Antichrist*, for a focus on an individual Antichrist persona.

39 Emerson, *Antichrist*, 66-71, notes a tradition of multiple antichrists in exegetical and popular medieval understanding, beginning with Church father, Augustine (354-430); yet, he claims that this position was much less prevalent compared to the idea of a singular Antichrist persona. Palmer, “Apocalyptic Outsiders,” 307-20, emphasizes the common tendency for medievals to vacillate between historic (one Antichrist operating within a specific context) and symbolic (multiple antichrists who threatened the moral turpitude of Christendom) understandings of apocalyptic antagonists.

40 See, for example, Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 46, 62-3, 76-100, 127-36, 165; Lewis, “Tractatus;” Hill, “Antichrist,” 99-117; Lipton, *Images of Intolerance*, especially 113-40.

For instance, some Jews—including the famed French rabbi, Rashi (1040-1105)—had risen to positions of authority within Christendom and they and their exegetical works were regularly consulted by ecclesiastics.⁴¹ Yet, by the late twelfth century, Jewish consultation would become less common within Christendom as ecclesiastics increasingly began to view Jews like the false prophet of the Apocalypse.⁴² And, like John’s imagining of the locusts with a man’s face and women’s hair, ecclesiastics began to both feminize and dehumanize Jews as part of a drawn out exercise in mental acrobatics in which the biblical interpretive mode of literalism most associated with Judaic practice rendered Jews “carnally” minded—the equivalent of women and beasts—in contrast to Christian men’s spiritual understanding of Scripture. Thus, in an abuse of Aristotelian philosophy, Jews became flesh to Christian spirit, Jewish female to Christian male, Jewish beast to Christian human.⁴³ The metaphors worked beyond religious association alone and, though incorporated in a religious text, would color secular social relations as well. For disgruntled Christians who felt left out of the burgeoning monetary economy, Jewish merchants with capital became like the beast who controlled the market.⁴⁴ And, like Babylon the Great, Jews incited lust and greed in Christians who were too easily bought by the mirage of borrowed wealth and the power it could procure.⁴⁵

But medieval Christians were not alone in associating antichrists with their nearest neighbors. Northern European, or Ashkenazic Jews, looked equally askance at Christians as apocalyptic antagonists who continuously tempted the faithful to assimilate to the dominant culture and religion, and thus abandon proper Jewish observance. In this regard, the function of anti-messiahs in *Sefer Zerubbabel*, and

41 Smalley, *The Study of the Bible*, 103-04, 119, 126; Grabois, “The Hebraica Veritas,” 613-34; Berndt, “Les interprétations juives,” 199-240; Moore, *Jews and Christians*, 57-8, 62, 64-5, 70-1.

42 Cohen, “The Jews as the Killers,” 1-27; Timmer, “Biblical Exegesis,” 309-21.

43 Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*, 175-82, 200-04, 211-12.

44 Lipton, *Images of Intolerance*, 87, 93, 138-39; Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*, 211-12.

45 See Strickland, “Antichrist and the Jews,” 23, 32.

texts sharing some of the motifs found therein, provide ample comparisons to John's Apocalypse and its medieval incarnations.

Sefer Zerubbabel's apocalyptic antagonists include a Persian ruler, Siroy, who is described as king "of fierce countenance."⁴⁶ This is a rare descriptor that literally means "goat face" and is found only twice in the biblical text: Moses is presented as having used it in his Deuteronomic prophecy of the Babylonian forces who would destroy Jerusalem and exile the Judean elite in the sixth century B.C.E.; and, the editor of the book of Daniel applied it to the final evil king who would emerge when transgressions were at their height to serve as God's scourge and met out divine retribution.⁴⁷ Joining Siroy is another king, a Roman ruler named Armilos and his unnamed mother, a stone statue of a beautiful woman. In addition to these, Satan and the demon, Belial, are referenced in passing, and *bet ha-toref*⁴⁸—a term that could be translated as "vagina," or the related "brothel," or "church"⁴⁹—also plays a role in tempting, if not fully corrupting, Jews.

As in John's Apocalypse, the relationship between the antagonists is pronounced and sometimes carries over to conflation. For instance, the title character first encounters the awaited Messiah filthy, down-trodden, and imprisoned in a *bet ha-toref*, located in a city that is

46 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Opp. 603, f. 33a, line 11; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Heb. d. 11, f. 248b, line 9. The latter manuscript, MS, Heb. d. 11, contains the fullest and best-known version of the *Sefer Zerubbabel*, and I am incredibly grateful to Dr. César Merchan-Hamann, Director of the Leopold Muller Memorial Library and Curator of Hebraica and Judaica at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, for permitting me access to this restricted manuscript and for taking time out of his busy schedule to patiently supervise me as I photographed it. I am also grateful to Judah Bob Rosenwald for his help and patience with transcribing and translating difficult passages in MS, Opp. 603.

47 Deut. 28:50; Dan. 8:23. Illuminated manuscripts of Christian apocalypses often depict the eschatological "beast" as a goat. Whether or not this representation is based on an interpretation and application of the biblical Hebrew used to describe Moses's and Daniel's apocalyptic antagonists is unknown, but may be worth further exploration.

48 The manuscripts actually read *בֵּית הַחֹרֶף*, *bet ha-horef*, or "the winter palace." Reeves, *Trajectories*, 52 n86, notes that this orthography has been addressed at length and that the consensus opinion is that the term should be read as *בֵּית הַחֹרֶף*, *bet ha-toref*.

49 Biale, "Counter-History," 139-40, was the first, to my knowledge, to call attention to the multiplicity of meanings of *bet ha-toref* within the context of the *Sefer Zerubbabel*.

identified as both Nineveh and Rome.⁵⁰ The stone statue too is found in a *bet ha-toref*. Armilos takes his mother from this *bet ha-toref* to parade her before the nations so that they may bow to her and, thus showing their devotion, be marked as eligible to conduct business within the realm.⁵¹ And, the demon Belial is presented as synonymous with Satan in his role as paramour to the stone statue—“This statue is the wife of Belial . . . Satan will come and lie with her . . .”⁵²—though at the conclusion of the text, Satan is identified as Belial’s father.⁵³ In these examples, location, relation, and function all speak to a collaboration among antichrist personae.

Similarities withstanding, there is less consensus when it comes to the dating of the *Sefer Zerubbabel* than that found in regard to John’s Apocalypse and so it has been somewhat more difficult to link each of the antagonists to specific individuals. In the early twentieth century, Israel Lévi argued what has since become the dominant position⁵⁴; namely, that the references to apocalyptic personae and, thus, the likely context of composition, pointed to seventh-century Palestine which, at the time, was located within the eastern half of the Roman Empire and ruled by the emperor Heraclius (610-641).⁵⁵ Lévi based his argument on the mention of Siroy, who, according to the *Sefer Zerubbabel*, would be an early persecutor of the Jews before Armilos, the second, more powerful apocalyptic antagonist emerged. Siroy was the name of the Sassanid shahansha, or emperor, who took the regnal name Kavād II (628), and briefly ruled Palestine after colluding with the Roman Emperor Heraclius by

50 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Opp. 603, f. 32b, line 11 and f. 33a, line 1; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Heb. d. 11, f. 248a, lines 14, 25-6 and f. 249b, line 21.

51 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Opp. 603, f. 32b, line 11 and f. 33a, line 1; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Heb. d. 11, f. 248a, lines 14, 25-6 and f. 249a, line 21.

52 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Heb. d. 11, f. 249a, lines 24-5; see also, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Opp. 603, f. 34a, line 2.

53 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Heb. d. 11, f. 251a, lines 9-10.

54 See Reeves, *Trajectories*, 47-8.

55 See Lévi, “L’apocalypse de Zorobabel,” 129-60; 69 (1914): 108-21; 71 (1920): 57-65. Subsequent references to these articles will be distinguished by (1), (2), and (3).

staging a coup against his father, Chosroes II (590-628).⁵⁶ Based on this information, Lévi interpreted the other main apocalyptic antagonists in the text—Armilos and his mother—as the Roman Emperor Heraclius and the Virgin Mary. He came to this conclusion by understanding Armilos as a transposed version of the mythic founder of Rome—Romulus—and applying it to the ruling Roman Emperor at the time he assumed the text was written. Lévi, and more recently Martha Himmelfarb, especially, have interpreted the stone statue as a foil of the Christian doctrine of the Blessed Virgin Mother and her divine impregnation, as well as a Jewish critique of the emperor's well-known devotion to Mary, which extended to taking an image of her into battle.⁵⁷

In addition to perceiving the apocalyptic antagonists to suit his reading of Siroy as the Sassanid emperor Kavād II, Lévi also adjusted his reading of specific numeric references to match the seventh-century compositional context he had in mind. The clearest example of this can be found when, despite unanimity among the extant textual recensions that describes a duration of forty years that the faithful would be able to worship in Jerusalem before the onslaught of attacks from Siroy and later Armilos, Lévi declared that the number of years should be read as four in order that the context he imposed be more closely aligned to Siroy's and Heraclius's respective rules.⁵⁸

The majority of scholars have accepted Lévi's position, even though the earliest extant remains of the *Sefer Zerubbabel* date to tenth-century fragments and may represent early versions of the text rather than reflecting a pre-existing tradition.⁵⁹ Unfortunately there is not a standardized text of the *Sefer Zerubbabel*, or even, for that matter, a standardized title or iconography by which to judge all other

56 Lévi, "L'apocalypse," (1) 152; See Reeves, *Trajectories*, 58 n128.

57 Lévi, "L'apocalypse," (1) 159; idem., (3), 60-1; Himmelfarb, "Sefer Zerubbabel," 69; Himmelfarb., "The Mother of the Messiah," 383-89.

58 Lévi, "L'Apocalypse," (1) 151n3; Reeves, *Trajectories*, 57 n125.

59 Reeves, *Trajectories*, 48.

recensions.⁶⁰ The longest of the versions, contributing to the fullest and best known modern transcription and translation,⁶¹ is included in a compilation manuscript dating to the early fourteenth-century Ashkenazic Jewry.⁶² Moreover, it is not at all apparent that mention of Persia or Rome in the *Sefer Zerubbabel* served any other purpose than a symbolic allusion to the Jewish demise and conquest by foreign powers. That is, the significance of the name Siroy is not necessarily in the importance of the minor Sassanid ruler who bore it,⁶³ except in the fact that his rule effectually marked the end of the old Persian empire that was often conflated with the Babylonian empire that had preceded it and that bore responsibility for the destruction of the First Temple and the Exile. The same principle may be applied to Armilos. If actually meant to represent Romulus, this antichrist persona could merely symbolize the eventual succession of the Roman empire, which had also conquered Israel and was responsible for the destruction of the Second Temple. Moreover—as in the case of interpretations of the antichrist personae in John’s Apocalypse as depictions of actual Roman emperors, culminating with Domitian—the numerical references do not quite add up when considered along with the principle of *ex eventu* prophecy noted above. For, if we were to consider textual references to the destruction of the Second Temple as an indication of an event that had already past, acknowledged by the author who presented himself as prophesying the coming of the Third and final Temple, along with a beginning date for the battles leading up to ultimate redemption occurring 990 years after the destruction of the Second Temple, compositional context would figure centuries after Heraclius, to the eleventh century.

60 See, for example, the title in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Opp. 603, f. 32b: רפסה זה והליאם מישודחו לבבורז חישמה רלממו ל”ז contra Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Opp. 236a, f. 13a: לאיתלאש רב לבבורז רפס ליחתא לאה תרזעב. Many thanks to Martha Himmelfarb for pointing out the oddity of the title in MS, Opp. 603 and sharing her preliminary thoughts on its significance.

61 See Himmelfarb’s English translation in, “Sefer Zerubbabel,” 71–81.

62 See note 46 above.

63 Speck, “The Apocalypse of Zerubbabel,” 187–90, has challenged both the plausibility of Lévi’s identification of the historical personae Heraclius and Siroy, as well as his dating of the *Sefer Zerubbabel* to the early seventh century.

In the nineteenth century, Heinrich Graetz, based on this same mathematical claim, dated the *Sefer Zerubbabel* to sometime around the 1050s-1060s. This is understandable as the text indicates that the Messiah would initially present himself 990 years after the destruction of the Second Temple, c.1068, and the references to warfare and the significance of Jerusalem seemed to coincide with events occurring in the latter half of the eleventh century.⁶⁴ Graetz's, rather than Lévi's, interpretation of compositional context is further supported in light of contemporary messianic and eschatological trends in eleventh- and twelfth-century Europe. For instance, in his seminal early twelfth-century work, *Lekach Tov*, R. Tobiah ben Eliezer (1050-1108) alluded to the popular Jewish belief that the Messiah was to come around the time of the First Crusade,⁶⁵ and the prominent apocalyptic antagonists in *Sefer Zerubbabel* are depicted through ethno-national terms—Romans and Persians—that could readily be applied to Christians and Muslims in both the decades leading up to and during the crusades. After all, the Holy Roman Empire based its authority on association with the Roman empire of antiquity; and, the casual reference to the early eleventh-century Muslim caliph al-Hakim (985-1021) as the “Prince of Babylon” by Cluniac monk and chronicler Ralph Glaber (985-1047) suggests the commonality of the metaphor.⁶⁶ Moreover, the so-called *Chronicle of Solomon bar Samson* (c. 1140), composed in Hebrew by an anonymous Ashkenazic Jew, described the anti-Jewish pogroms in the Rhineland at the close of the eleventh century and depicted other familiar figures known from the *Sefer Zerubbabel* to suit an eleventh-century context. In it, crusaders, like the Persian King, Siroy, are depicted as ‘*azey fanim*, or “strong of face,”⁶⁷ Satan is none other

64 Graetz, “Das Buch Zerubabel,” 59. Many thanks to Matthew Carver for providing me with a translation of Graetz's work.

65 See Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation*, 59-60.

66 See Chazan, “1007-1012: Initial Crisis for Northern European Jewry,” 109.

67 *Salomo bar Simson (Chronik I, Hs. E)* in Haverkamp, ed., *Hebräische Berichte*, 248 n14 (hereafter, Haverkamp); *The Chronicle of Solomon ben R. Samson*, in Roos, ‘*God Wants It!*’ Appendix 6 (hereafter, Roos); and Chazan, *God, Humanity*, 62, have each noted the biblical reference in Deuteronomy 28:50, but not in Dan. 8:23. As suggested by Haverkamp's and Roos's titles, there are numerous variations in scholarship in regard to both title and transliteration of the author's name of the text cited above. Throughout this paper, and in the remainder of the notes, I refer to the text as *The Chronicle of Solomon bar Samson*.

than *ha-papius shel Rumi ha-rasha* “the Pope of wicked Rome,”⁶⁸ and the Virgin Mary as *ha-niddah* “the menstruant”⁶⁹ and *ha-Zonah* “the whore”⁷⁰—essentially defined by vaginal impurity alluded to in the *Sefer Zerubbabel*’s placement of her in a *bet ha-toref*. Solomon described a prominent crusading duke, Godfrey of Bouillon, as having been led astray by a *ruah zenunim* “spirit of whoredom”⁷¹ in his desire to heed the Pope’s call and go on crusade, suggesting that the author’s use of vaginal impurity was intended to convey impure religious beliefs as well as physical impurities. And Count Emicho of Flonheim—an individual considered by contemporary ecclesiastical authors to harbor a desire to be the Last Roman Emperor foretold of in the popular Christian apocalypse, the *Tiburtine Sybil*,⁷² was cast as a type of other apocalyptic antagonists in Israel’s past, including the ninth-century B.C.E. King Hazael of Amram and further unidentified agents sent by God to lay waste to Israel’s sinners and purify the community.⁷³

To conclude, the types of apocalyptic antagonists in John’s Apocalypse and the *Sefer Zerubbabel* transcended whatever the context of composition may have been. Receivers and transmitters of both adjusted their interpretations of these apocalypses to suit their own context, reading the highly symbolic agents of temptation and threat as their closest neighbors who had the ability to offer the most and harm the worst. While this speaks to inter-confessional xenophobia, it also hints at inter-confessional proximity and a desire, however repressed, to integrate further still.

68 *העשרה ימור לש סויפפה*, אטשה 68: *The Chronicle of Solomon bar Samson*, Haverkamp, 299; Roos, A30.

69 *The Chronicle of Solomon bar Samson*, Haverkamp, 253, 333; See, in contrast, Roos, A9n16, 47.

70 *The Chronicle of Solomon bar Samson*, Haverkamp, 333, 371; Roos, A47, A65-6.

71 *The Chronicle of Solomon bar Samson*, Haverkamp, 295; Roos, A29.

72 Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 73; Gabriele, “Against the Enemies of Christ,” 62. Chazan, “‘Let Not a Remnant Or a Residue Escape,’” 305-06; Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven*, 50-2.

73 *The Chronicle of Solomon bar Samson*, Haverkamp, 309; Roos, A36.

Illustrations



Figure 1: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Auct, D. 14, f.34b



Figure 2: Oxford, Bodleian Lan Library, MS, Tanner 184, p. 24



Figure 3: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 184, p.28



Figure 4: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Auct, D. 14, p. 28



Figure 5: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Auct, D. 4.14, p.24



Figure 6: Oxford: Bodleian Library, MS, Tanner 184, p. 26



Figure 7: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Tanner 184, p. 46



Figure 8: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Tanner 184, p. 47



Figure 9: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS, Auct, D. 4.14, p. 44

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