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The Desecration of "the Most Holy Temple of All the World" in the "Holy Land"

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Published in:
The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2009

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van Kooten, G. H. (2009). The Desecration of "the Most Holy Temple of All the World" in the "Holy Land": Early Jewish and Early Christian Recollections of Antiochus' "Abomination of Desolation". In J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, & J. C. de Vos (Eds.), *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology: Studies in Honour of Ed Noort* (pp. 291-316). (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum; No. 124). Martinus Nijhoff/Brill.

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THE DESECRATION OF "THE MOST HOLY
TEMPLE OF ALL THE WORLD" IN THE "HOLY LAND":
EARLY JEWISH AND EARLY CHRISTIAN RECOLLECTIONS
OF ANTIOCHUS' "ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION"

GEORGE H. VAN KOOTEN

1. *Introduction*

The interest in the concept of land in the Jewish Scriptures is an important feature of Ed Noort's research, and was the topic of his inaugural lecture at the University of Groningen in 1993.¹ Moreover, not only the notion, but also the archaeology of the land of Israel is a dominant issue in his scholarly work. Various passages in the Jewish Scriptures state, both implicitly and explicitly, that the land of Israel is holy.² According to one particular perspective, the land is holy, with at its heart "the most holy temple of all the world" (2 Macc 1:7; 5:15: τὸ πάσης τῆς γῆς ἁγιώτατον ἱερόν). In this paper I shall relate how this holy place was pillaged by the Hellenistic-Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes (2 Macc 5:15–20) and polluted at his command. It was then turned into a temple

¹ E. Noort, "Land in zicht ...? Geloofsvisie, werkelijkheid en geschiedenis in het oudtestamentische spreken over het land. Enkele opmerkingen n.a.v. Jozua 21:43–45," in *Tussen openbaring en ervaring: Studies aangeboden aan G.P. Hartvelt*, (ed. J.N. Bakker et al.; Kampen 1986), 94–113; idem, *Een plek om te zijn: Over de theologie van het land aan de hand van Jozua 8:30–35. Inaugurale oratie bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van hoogleraar aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen 8.6.1993*, Kampen 1993; idem, "Land in the Deuteronomistic Tradition—Genesis 15: The Historical and Theological Necessity of a Diachronic Approach," in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis: Papers Read at the Ninth Joint Meeting of "Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België" and "The Society For Old Testament Study," Held at Kampen, 1994* (ed. J.C. de Moor; OTS 34; Leiden 1995), 129–144; idem, "Land and Reconciliation: Land Claims and Loss of Land," *Nederduits-Gereformeerd Theologische Tydskrif* 39 (1998) 12–28; idem, "Denn das Land gehört mir, ihr seid Fremde und Beisassen bei mir' (Lev 25, 23): Landgabe als eine kritische Theologie des Landes," in *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 23: "Heiliges Land" (Neukirchen-Vluyn, forthcoming).

² D.P. Wright, "Holiness (OT)," *ABD* 3:237–249 (at 243); W. Janzen, "Land," *ABD* 4:143–154 (at 144).

of Olympian Zeus in 168/167 BC (2 Macc 6:1–6). In Danielic terms, this desecration of the Jerusalem temple is characterized as the setting up of the “abomination of desolation(s)” (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) and constitutes the prime issue in Daniel 9–12. This event, and the subsequent rededication of the temple on 25 Chislev (December) 164 BC by Judas the Maccabee, was vividly commemorated in the annual celebration of the Hanukkah festival.³ I shall particularly address the question of whether, and in what way Antiochus’ installation of the abomination of desolation was remembered in early Jewish and early Christian literature. Given that Jews were very well aware of these events, described as prophecy in Daniel and as fulfilled history in the books of the Maccabees, it strikes one as particularly odd that Christians, but to a certain extent even the Jew Flavius Josephus, too, could so easily detach the Danielic notion of the abomination of desolation from the figure of Antiochus, and reapply it to Nero or the Flavians in the context of the destruction of the temple in AD 70.

My focus in this paper, however, is those ancient Jews and early Christians who continued to relate the Danielic “abomination of desolation” to the figure of Antiochus IV. After a brief discussion of this phrase in Daniel, I shall first discuss its interpretation in 1 and 2 Maccabees and Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*, and subsequently the way it is understood in the early Christian writings of Hippolytus, Jerome, and Cassian. When dealing with Jerome’s interpretation, we shall also encounter the views of the third century AD pagan philosopher Porphyry.

2. *Abomination and Antiochus*

2.1. *Daniel*

It has long been recognized that Daniel’s prediction about the installation of the abomination of desolation alludes to the profanation of the Jerusalem temple in 168/7 BC by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (ca. 215–164 BC). Antiochus IV became king of the Seleucid empire in 175 BC, and sought to incorporate Ptolemaic Egypt and Cyprus (170–169/8) into his empire. This plan failed, however, when Rome intervened and ordered Antiochus from Egypt. At this time, Antiochus also turned his attentions

³ J.C. VanderKam, “Dedication, Feast of,” *ABD* 2:123–125.

to Jerusalem and overturned the charter which his father Antiochus III had drawn up to guarantee the cult of Yahweh at the Jerusalem temple. Antiochus IV tried to hellenize Judea, although—as A. Mehl points out—“the extent to which he sought to hellenize the Jews and then his own state must not be overestimated.”⁴ His attempts were met with ferocious resistance by the Jews, as both the book of Daniel and the books of the Maccabees testify.

Daniel’s statements about Antiochus IV are cloaked in the form of prophecies which Daniel is said to have uttered in the sixth century BC after the experience of the beginning of the Babylonian exile. When Daniel perceives “in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah, must be fulfilled for the devastation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years” (Dan 9:2; Jer 25:11–12; 29:10–14), Gabriel descends to him and enlightens his understanding (Dan 9:20–22). The seventy years are to be understood as seventy times seven years (9:23–24). After the return from the Babylonian exile and, after seven weeks, the subsequent restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem, there will be a large time-span of 62 weeks that Jerusalem will remain restored (9:25). This situation alters, however, when the following takes place in the last, seventieth week:

- 26 After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.
- 27 He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place (LXX: καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ ἱερόν, “and on the temple”) shall be an abomination that desolates (LXX: βδέλυγμα τῶν ἐρημώσεων, “the abomination of desolations”), until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator. (Dan 9:26–27)⁵

The desolator in question is recognized, both in Antiquity (as we shall see when we deal with Porphyry) and in modern scholarly opinion, as Antiochus IV Epiphanes.⁶

⁴ Cf. G.T. Griffith and S.M. Sherwin-White, “Antiochus (4) IV (Epiphanes),” *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3d ed.; Oxford 1996); A. Mehl, “Antiochus [6] IV. King of the Seleucids (175–164 BC),” in *Brill’s New Pauly: Antiquity Volumes* (ed. H. Cancik and H. Schneider; 2008; Brill Online; Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 09 October 2008).

⁵ Cf. also Daniel (Theod.) 9:27. Translation of biblical writings after the NRSV, with occasional alterations.

⁶ J.J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, Minn., 1993), 356–358.

The prophetic picture of Daniel 9 is fine-tuned in another revelation in Daniel 11, describing Antiochus' manoeuvre from Egypt back to Jerusalem, under the pressure of Roman intervention:

- 29 At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but this time it shall not be as it was before.
- 30 For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall lose heart and withdraw. He shall be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay heed to those who forsake the holy covenant.
- 31 Forces sent by him shall occupy and profane the temple and fortress. They shall abolish the regular burnt-offering and set up the abomination that makes desolate (LXX: καὶ ἀποστήσουσι τὴν θυσίαν καὶ δώσουσι βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως).
- 32 He shall seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant; but the people who are loyal to their God shall stand firm and take action. (Dan 11:29–32)

At the very end of the book of Daniel, in chapter 12, Daniel is ordered to keep secret the words of his book, including the revelations concerning the abomination of desolation, and to seal the book: “the words are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end” (12:4, 9). The author, writing about the present, in which the Jerusalem cult has been desecrated by Antiochus, distinguishes between two categories of Jews: those who collaborate with Antiochus, and those who remain loyal to Yahweh and are identical with, or are guided by “those who are wise” (Dan 12:10). The latter, who have apparently unsealed Daniel's words, now read that the time between Antiochus' desecration of the Jerusalem cult and its re-establishment will be 1,290 days, i.e. 3.5 years, or, alternatively, the slightly longer period of 1,355 days:

- 11 From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination of desolation is set up (LXX: καὶ ἐτοιμασθῆ δοθῆναι τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως), there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.
- 12 Happy are those who persevere and attain the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. (Dan 12:11–12)⁷

In Daniel, the phrase “abomination of desolation” is used in a consistent way and points, in all three instances, to the desecration of the Jerusalem temple by Antiochus IV.

⁷ Cf. also Daniel (Theod.) 12:11.

2.2. *1 and 2 Maccabees and Josephus*

The first to recognize that Daniel’s reference to “the abomination of desolation” should be applied to Antiochus’ desecration of the Jerusalem temple is the author of 1 Maccabees. In the writing, which narrates the revolt against Antiochus, the author mentions the Danielic abomination of the temple at the beginning of his narrative about the desecration of the temple, in the following words:

Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year [167 BC], they erected an abomination of desolation on the altar of burnt offering (ἔτει ᾠκοδόμησεν βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον). (1 Macc 1:54)

Whereas the wording of 1 Maccabees (written after 104 BC) remains close to the terminology of Daniel, 2 Maccabees drops the Danielic terminology and is far clearer about what actually happened. Having described how Antiochus IV dared to enter the temple of Jerusalem, take the holy vessels and carry off eighteen hundred talents from the temple (2 Macc 5:15–16, 21), the author of 2 Maccabees (writing between 104 BC and 63 BC) tells the following:

Not long after this, the king [i.e. Antiochus IV] sent an Athenian senator to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their ancestors and no longer to live by the laws of God; also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it the temple of Olympian Zeus. (2 Macc 6:1–2)

Although Flavius Josephus, too, drops the Danielic phrase “abomination of desolation,” in his retelling of the Antiochus narrative, Josephus does refer to Daniel explicitly, and also speaks of the “desolation” of the temple. Josephus mentions Antiochus’ profanation of the temple in his narration of the rededication of the temple (164 BC) which, according to 1 Maccabees, signalled the beginning of a yearly festival:

Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev. (1 Macc 4:59)⁸

In the context of his description of this rededication of the temple in book 12 of his *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus describes how the profanation was foretold by Daniel:

⁸ For the rededication of the temple, see 1 Macc 4:36–61 and 2 Macc 10:1–9. For the inauguration of the festival, see also 2 Macc 10:8.

Now the desolation (ἐρήμωσις) of the temple came about in accordance with the prophecy of Daniel, which had been made four hundred and eight years before; for he had revealed that the Macedonians would destroy it—τὴν δ' ἐρήμωσιν τοῦ ναοῦ συνέβη γενέσθαι κατὰ τὴν Δανιήλου προφητείαν πρὸ τετρακοσίων καὶ ὀκτὼ γενομένην ἐτῶν· ἐδήλωσεν γάρ, ὅτι Μακεδόνες καταλύσουσιν αὐτόν. (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.322)

Josephus already refers to Antiochus' profanation of the Jerusalem temple in his narrative about the historical Daniel and the visions which he received in book 10 of the *Jewish Antiquities*. And very relevantly for our present purposes, in one breath Josephus also points to the destruction of the temple by the Romans in AD 70. Commenting on Daniel's vision in Daniel 8 about the arrival of the Greek-Hellenistic era and the subsequent unfolding of Seleucid chronology, Josephus writes:

And there would arise from their number a certain king who would make war on the Jewish nation and their laws, deprive them of the form of government based on these laws, spoil the temple and prevent the sacrifices from being offered for three years [cf. *Ant.* 10.271]. And these misfortunes our nation did in fact come to experience under Antiochus Epiphanes, just as Daniel many years before saw and wrote that they would happen. In the same manner (τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον) Daniel also wrote about the empire of the Romans and that Jerusalem would be taken by them and the temple laid waste—τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον ὁ Δανιήλος καὶ περὶ τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίας ἀνέγραψε, καὶ ὅτι ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἐρημωθήσεται. (Josephus, *Ant.* 10.275–276)

There are several relevant aspects to this passage. (1) First, in Josephus' interpretation of Daniel as applying also to the laying waste of the temple by the Romans (ὅτι ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἐρημωθήσεται), the Danielic vocabulary of desolation (ἐρήμωσις) still shines through; this destruction, too, is described in Danielic terminology.

(2) Secondly, the analogy which Josephus draws between the profanation of the temple by Antiochus and the desolation by the Romans throws a great deal of light on how Mark can apply the Daniel statement concerning Antiochus' instalment of the abomination of desolation to the Roman emperor Nero (see Mark 13).⁹ According to Josephus, Daniel not only foresaw Antiochus' profanation but also, "in the same manner" (τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον), wrote about the events of AD 70. How exactly Josephus understood the qualifier "in the same manner" remains unclear. It seems

⁹ On Mark and Nero, see M. Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia 1985), 25–28.

as though he thinks a double application of the same prophecy is possible. We shall also see this procedure at work in Hippolytus.

(3) Thirdly, it is remarkable that Josephus does not draw the analogy between Antiochus and the Romans in *The Jewish War*, when describing the destruction of the Jerusalem temple by the Romans. In his description of the events of AD 70 Josephus does not refer back to Daniel’s prophecy about Antiochus, and does not say that it applies equally to Vespasian. He probably refrains from doing so, because the comparison between Antiochus IV and Vespasian would reflect badly upon the latter. It seems, however, that book 10 of his *Jewish Antiquities* harbours less favourable views on the Flavians, at least implicitly, by comparing their actions with those of Antiochus.

(4) Finally, I wish to point out that the way in which Josephus portrays Antiochus in the passage above constructs a deliberate antithesis with Alexander the Great. Whereas Antiochus, as Daniel predicted, would try to abolish the Jewish cult and customs, Alexander the Great, upon his arrival in Jerusalem, would be very pleased to read in the book of Daniel, presumably in the vision of the defeat of a ram by a goat (Daniel 8), that he was to defeat the Persians. Out of gratitude, according to Josephus, Alexander would grant the Jews freedom of religion. From this perspective, Alexander the Great contrasts sharply with both Antiochus and the Romans, who either profaned or even destroyed the Jerusalem cult. The actions of the latter two are very different from the attitude of Alexander:

Then he went up to the temple, where he sacrificed to God under the direction of the high priest, and showed due honour to the priests and to the high priest himself. And, when the book of Daniel was shown to him, in which he had declared that one of the Greeks would destroy the empire of the Persians, he believed himself to be the one indicated. (Josephus, *Ant.* 11.337)

In return, Alexander grants the Jews the right to live according to their ancestral customs (*Ant.* 11.338–339).

2.3. *Christian interpretations*

Following the gospel of Mark, several Christians applied the Danielic prediction of the “abomination of desolation” to the events of AD 70, either to Nero or the Flavians. Even more Christian interpreters, the

majority, applied the phrase exclusively to the future activities of the antichrist. Only a few Christians continued to realize that, originally, the prediction applied to Antiochus IV. The latter category includes Hippolytus (ca. AD 170–ca. 236), Jerome (ca. AD 347–420), and Cassian (ca. AD 360 – ca. 435).

2.3.1. Hippolytus

In Hippolytus' commentary on Daniel, in what is generally taken to be the oldest preserved Christian commentary on a biblical book, Hippolytus has a similar kind of double application of Daniel's prophecy as we encountered in Josephus. Hippolytus applies Daniel's prediction regarding the erection of an abomination of desolation in the Jerusalem temple both to the events under Antiochus IV and to a second occasion after that. But whereas Josephus dates this second instance in the past, in the time of Vespasian, Hippolytus expects it to take place in the future, in the time of the antichrist. Hippolytus reads the dual application of Daniel's prophecy back into the compound expression "abomination of desolation," and dates the "abomination" as a local affair under Antiochus, whereas the "desolation" is taken to refer to a universal episode at the end of time.¹⁰ According to Hippolytus,

Daniel has spoken, therefore, of two abominations; the one of destruction, and the other of desolation. What is that of destruction, but that which Antiochus established there at the time? And what is that of desolation, but that which shall be universal when antichrist comes?—Δύο οὖν βδελύγματα προείρηκεν Δανιήλ, ἓν μὲν ἀφανισμοῦ, ἓν δὲ ἐρημώσεως. Τί τὸ τοῦ ἀφανισμοῦ ἄλλ' ἢ ὃ ἔστησεν ἐκεῖ κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν ὁ Ἀντίοχος; καὶ τί τὸ τῆς ἐρημώσεως ἄλλ' ἢ τὸ καθ' ὅλου, ὡς παρέσται ὁ ἀντίχριστος; (Hippolytus, *Comm. Dan.* 4.44)

Although Josephus and Hippolytus differ in their understanding of the second event, both agree that the first incident is that of Antiochus' profanation of the Jerusalem temple. Hippolytus is well aware of the figure of Antiochus, probably because he is familiar with 1 Maccabees (Hippolytus, *Comm. Dan.* 4.26, 42, 46); he is also acquainted with 2 Maccabees, as is shown by the reference to the history of the seven martyrs, which is derived from 2 Maccabees 7 (Hippolytus, *Comm. Dan.* 2.35; cf. also 3.4).

¹⁰ Cf. also the Alexandrian presbyter Ammonius who, according to Cook, "saw a 'partial abomination' in Antiochus with the universal abomination referring to the Antichrist." See J.G. Cook, *The Interpretation of the Old Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 23; Tübingen 2004), 218–219 n. 377.

Hippolytus is positive that Daniel’s predictions regarding Antiochus IV have indeed been fulfilled, as he says explicitly: Καὶ γεγένηται καὶ τοῦτο (4.45). Hippolytus’ profound knowledge of 1 Maccabees is probably the reason that he is unable to deny the historical dimension of the Danielic text. Hippolytus, by placing the second manifestation of the abomination of desolation in the future, even goes against the original meaning of Mark 13, which, like Josephus, is concerned with the destruction of the temple by the Romans in AD 70. Hippolytus’ connection of the abomination of desolation with the antichrist becomes common practice, however, in interpreters such as Irenaeus, Origen, and Ambrosius. What is remarkable about Hippolytus is the extent to which he simultaneously retains the link between the text of Daniel 9–12 and the historical events surrounding Antiochus IV.

2.3.2. Jerome

The same continuing interest in the original historical circumstances in the Hellenistic era is present in Jerome. In his commentary on Daniel, Jerome mentions both the plundering of the Jerusalem temple and the installation of the abomination of desolation by Antiochus IV Epiphanes:

Those of another perspective claim that the persons spoken about [in Dan 11:31] are those who were sent by Antiochus two years after he had looted the temple to exact tribute from the Jews—and also to erase reverence for God, he set up an image of Jupiter Olympius in the Temple at Jerusalem, and also statues of Antiochus. Now this is called the abomination of desolation, having been set up when the holocaust and continual sacrifice were abolished.—Volunt autem eos significari: qui ab Antiocho missi sunt, post biennium quam templum exspoliaverat, ut tributa exigent a Iudaeis et auferrent cultum Dei et in templo Hierusalem Iovis Olympii simulacrum et Antiochi statuas ponerent, quas nunc “abominationem desolationis” vocat, quando ablatum est holocaustum et iuge sacrificium. (Jerome, *Comm. Dan.* 4.11.31, 921.170–176 [trans. Berchman, frg. 88]; cf. 2 Macc 5:15–16, 21; 6:1–2)¹¹

Jerome ascribes this view to “those of another perspective,” i.e., to the pagan philosopher Porphyry (AD 234–ca. 305). Porphyry studied at Athens, and with Plotinus at Rome. Following in the footsteps of Plotinus’ writings against the Christian Gnostics (*Enneads* 2.9), Porphyry wrote a

¹¹ Ed. F. Glorie, *Commentariorum in Daniele Libri III (IV)* (vol. 1.5 of *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera*; CCSL 75A; Turnhout 1964). References are to section numbers, followed by page and line numbers.

treatise *Against the Christians*; in the twelfth book of this work, as Jerome remarks, Porphyry attacks the way in which Christians interpret the prophecies of Daniel as being fulfilled in the Christian era.¹² As Jerome reports in the introduction to his commentary, Porphyry bases his attack on the observation that the book of Daniel is a pseudepigraphical writing of the Hellenistic era, and that it is composed on the principle of *vaticinia ex eventu*:

Porphyry wrote his twelfth book against Daniel's prophecy, denying that it was written by the person to whom its title refers, but rather by some person residing in Judea at the time of that Antiochus, who was surnamed Epiphanes. Furthermore he alleged that "Daniel" did not foretell the future as much as he narrated the past, and finally whatever he said until the time of Antiochus contained true history, while anything he may have opined beyond that point was false, inasmuch as he could not have foreknown the future. (Jerome, *Comm. Dan.*, Prologus, 771.1-8)

As a result, according to Jerome, Porphyry claims that everything which—in the view of Christians—is predicted in the book of Daniel about the Christian era in general and about the advent of the antichrist in particular has already been fulfilled in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (Prologus, 772.19-24). Interestingly, however, with regard to the "abomination of desolation" mentioned in Dan 11:31, Jerome does not simply disagree with Porphyry by stating that this passage applies to the antichrist instead of Antiochus. Like Josephus and Hippolytus, Jerome believes that the prophecies of Daniel can have a double application, the first with reference to Antiochus, the second to a later event. Whereas Josephus sees this second instance as having already taken place in his own past, in the events of AD 70, according to both Hippolytus and Jerome the second fulfilment of Daniel's prediction is expected to take place with the future manifestation of the antichrist. None of the three, however, denies that the first historical context is that of Antiochus Epiphanes.

¹² On the historical setting of Porphyry's treatise, see T.D. Barnes, "Scholarship or Propaganda?: Porphyry's *Against the Christians* and Its Historical Setting," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 39 (1994) 53-65. For translations of Porphyry's views on Daniel, see R.M. Berchman, *Porphyry Against the Christians* (Ancient Mediterranean and Medieval Texts and Contexts: Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic tradition 1; Leiden 2005); Cook, *The Interpretation of the Old Testament*; M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism: Edited with Introductions, Translations and Commentary* (Publications of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Section of Humanities; Fontes ad res Judaicas spectantes; 3 vols.; Jerusalem 1974-1984), no. 464.

As far as the Christian authors Hippolytus and Jerome are concerned, the latter's view are far more sophisticated than the former's. They need to be, as Hippolytus lived prior to Porphyry's detailed criticism of the book of Daniel in the third century AD, whereas Jerome could not ignore it. Jerome was not the first Christian to deal with Porphyry's views on Daniel; in his prologue he refers to Eusebius of Caesarea, Apollinaris of Laodicea and Methodius for previous attempts (771.8–772.11), which have not been preserved. Whereas Hippolytus simply, without further reflection, distinguishes between two kinds of abomination, the “abomination of destruction” which Antiochus established locally, and the “abomination of desolation” which the antichrist will enact universally, Jerome's treatment of the phrase “abomination of desolation” is sophisticated in two respects: (a) he develops a detailed chronology which spans the Graeco-Roman period, and which enables him to differentiate between different referents of the phrase “abomination of desolation,” and (b) he distinguishes between a historical and typological interpretation of the term under consideration.

Jerome's chronology and the referents of “abomination of desolation”

First, Jerome differentiates between different events in history that the phrase “abomination of desolation” stands for, depending on the chapter of Daniel in which it occurs. Whereas Porphyry reads all three instances of the phrase (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) as a consistent reference to the desecration of the Jerusalem temple by Antiochus in the Hellenistic era, Jerome regards the occurrences in Daniel 9 and 12 as a reference to the future manifestation of the antichrist in the Roman era, while assigning to the instance of Daniel 11 a dual date, both in the Hellenistic period under Antiochus, and at the end of the Roman period when the antichrist will appear.¹³ For this reason, unlike Porphyry, Jerome recommends not only the Greek historians as background reading to the book of Daniel, but also Josephus, together with the Roman historians whom he invokes, and who cover the entire period from Alexander the Great through to Augustus:

And now, to understand the last parts of Daniel, a many-faceted study of Greek history is necessary: such authorities as Sutorius, Callinicus, Diodorus, Hieronymus, Polybius, Posidonius, Claudius Theon, and An-

¹³ On Jerome's view on the antichrist, see also J.P. O'Connell, *The Eschatology of Saint Jerome* (Dissertationes ad lauream; Pontificia facultas theologia Seminarii Sanctae Mariae ad lacum 16; Mundelein, Ill., 1948), 25–31.

dronicus, surnamed Alipius, whom Porphyry says he himself followed; but, Josephus, too, and those whom Josephus invokes, especially our Livy, Pompeius Trogus, and Justin. (Prologus, 775.86–95; includes Berchman, frg. 72)

Jerome's clear message is that the prophecies of Daniel apply not only to the Hellenistic period, but also to the Roman era in which the appearance of Christ and the future manifestation of the antichrist take place. Already in his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great statue which consists of layers of gold, silver, bronze, and iron mixed with clay, and which is struck by a stone in Daniel 2, Jerome deviates from Porphyry. Jerome considers the mixture of iron and clay, which symbolizes the fourth kingdom (Dan 2:40), as a reference not to the Hellenistic Greeks, but to the Romans, whose strength is diminished because "in the civil wars and in the wars against diverse nations, we need the help," Jerome says, "of barbarian people" (1.2.31–35, 794.399–795.399–795.406).¹⁴ Similarly, in his exegesis of Daniel's vision of the four animals in Daniel 7, Jerome criticizes Porphyry for taking the third and fourth beast together as a reference to the Hellenistic kingdom. According to Jerome, the third beast refers to Alexander *and* his successors, the fourth to the Romans (2.7.7a, 842.550–843.566). The reasons for Jerome's dating of the fulfilment of these prophecies in Roman times instead of the Hellenistic period is that he doubts whether particular features of Daniel 2 and 7 were indeed realized in the time of Antiochus IV. The stone which is said to hit the statue in Daniel 2 is described as having been "cut out, not by human hands," and it strikes the statue in such a way that

the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were all broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Dan 2:34–35)

¹⁴ For the social-cultural context of Jerome's commentary on Daniel, R. Courtray, "Der Danielkommentar des Hieronymus," in *Die Geschichte der Daniel-Auslegung in Judentum, Christentum und Islam: Studien zur Kommentierung des Danielbuches in Literatur und Kunst* (ed. K. Bracht and D.S. du Toit; BZAW 371; Berlin 2007), 123–150, esp. 138–139, 142–144. Cf. also G.S. Oegema, "Die Danielrezeption in der alten Kirche," in *Europa, Tausendjähriges Reich und Neue Welt: Zwei Jahrtausende Geschichte und Utopie in der Rezeption des Danielbuches* (ed. M. Delgado et al.; Studien zur christlichen Religions- und Kulturgeschichte 1; Freiburg 2003), 84–104 at 96: "seine Endzeiterwartungen [wurden] möglicherweise von den Angriffen der Barbaren am Anfang des 5. Jh.s n. Chr. beeinflusst."

This description, according to Jerome, is wrongly applied, both by Porphyry and by Jewish interpreters, to the Maccabees who resisted Antiochus:

“He became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.” This the Jews and the impious Porphyry incorrectly apply to the people of Israel, who they insist will be the greatest power at the end of the ages, and will crush all realms, and will rule for eternity. (1.2.31–35, 795.410–414; Berchman, frg. 74, with alterations)

These expectations regarding a permanent, powerful and universal kingdom were not fulfilled in Hellenistic times, Jerome implies. The same holds true for the prophecy regarding the “son of man” in Daniel 7, the “one like a human being” who is expected to receive dominion when the fourth beast (identified with the Greeks in Porphyry’s interpretation, but with the Romans from Jerome’s perspective), and in particular the little horn which comes up among its ten horns, is put to death. It is this “son of man” to whom

was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed. (Dan 7:14)

This, Jerome states, cannot apply to one of the Maccabees who resisted Antiochus IV:

Let Porphyry answer the question from all mankind to whom this language refers, or who this person might be who was so strong as to break and crush to pieces the little horn, whom he contrives to be Antiochus? If he answers that the princes of Antiochus were defeated by Judas Maccabaeus, then he must explain how Judas could be said to arrive with the heavenly clouds as the Son of Man. (2.7.14b, 848.700–705)

And if it is written that “the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever—for ever and ever” (Dan 7:18), Jerome remarks that “if one applies this prophecy to the Maccabees, the one who advances this opinion should clarify in what sense their reign is eternal” (2.7.18b, 849.716–718). The reference to “an eternal, everlasting kingdom” (Dan 7:27), according to Jerome, is made with regard to the empire of Jesus Christ which is eternal: “Hoc de Christi imperio quod sempiternum est” (2.7.27a, 850.745–746).

In Jerome’s view, neither the stone in Daniel 2, nor the son of man in Daniel 7 represents the Jewish resistance to Antiochus IV, because their rule was not universal, nor did their rule prove lasting. Near the end of

his commentary Jerome draws his observations together in the following rhetorical questions to Porphyry:

He should leave aside what is dubious, and keep himself to what is manifest: Let him tell who is this stone, cut from the mountain not by human hands, and which became a great mountain and filled the whole earth, and struck the statue which consists of four forms? Who is this son of man, who needs to come with the clouds of heaven, appear before the Ancient One, and receive a kingdom which is not limited by any end—this son of man whom all peoples, tribes, and languages should serve? Porphyry dismisses things which are manifest, and asserts that the prophecy refers to the Jews, although we know well that they are in chains up to this day. And he claims that the person who wrote the book of Daniel made it up in his mind to renew the hopes of his landsmen—not that he was capable of fore-knowledge of the whole of future history. Rather he remembers facts that had already occurred. (4.11.44–45, 932.411–422; includes Berchman, frg. 89)

For these reasons, Jerome refuses to limit the interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel to the Hellenistic era. The aim of his entire commentary, as Jerome renders explicit in the prologue, is in fact to demonstrate that the arrival of Christ on the scene of history in the Roman era was prophesied by Daniel. Having just said that Porphyry's view on Daniel has already been successfully refuted by Eusebius, Apollinaris of Laodicea and, before them, although only partially, by Methodius, Jerome states:

As my true aim is not to reply to the false statements of an adversary, which would require a long treatise, but to explicate for our own people, i.e., the Christians, what the prophet has said, in the prologue I remind the readers forcibly of the fact that no other prophet has so clearly spoken about Christ. And not only did he write *that* he would come, which he holds in common with other prophets, but he taught in which era he would come, listed the kings in their proper order, enumerated the years, and predicted the most notable signs. (Prologus, 772.12–19)

In order to realize this aim, Jerome must argue that Daniel's prophecies are not limited to the time of the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, and the Hellenistic Greeks (1.2.31–35, 794.389–399), but also encompass the Roman era, which saw the birth of Christ and still extends into the future, to the advent of the antichrist. It is against this chronological background that Jerome also interprets the chapters in which the phrase "abomination of desolation" occurs (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Unlike Porphyry, who interprets this phrase in a uniform way with reference to Antiochus IV's profanation of the Jerusalem temple, Jerome applies it to the future actions of the antichrist. Like Daniel 2 and 7, Daniel 9

and 11–12 are related by Jerome to the end of the Roman era. We shall see, however, that this is not entirely true of Daniel 11. In this chapter Jerome also seriously contemplates, and does not rule out, a connection with the Hellenistic era of Antiochus IV. We shall now discuss in detail how Jerome interprets the actual phrase “abomination of desolation” in Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.

In Daniel’s prophecy in Daniel 9 regarding the “seventy weeks” which elapse between the end of the Babylonian exile and the end of time, the last week, in which the abomination of desolation becomes apparent, is described as follows, in the words of the angel Gabriel:

- 26 An anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.
- 27 He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator. (Dan 9:26–27)

In this instance, Jerome only records the opinions of various Christian commentators and refers for an interpretation of the phrase “abomination of desolation” to Apollinaris of Laodicea, whom Jerome—as we saw above—also mentions as one of the earlier critics of Porphyry (Prologus, 771.8–772.11). He is the only one of the commentators whose views on the abomination of desolation are explicitly brought up. According to Apollinaris, the abomination of desolation will take place under the antichrist (3.9, 24a, 879.448–458). In his commentary on Daniel 9, Jerome does not present his own position, but offers his readers a wide selection of choices: he affects to find it inappropriate to judge the opinions of the masters of the church and to prefer one to the other. Among his choices are futuristic interpretations in terms of the antichrist (like Apollinaris’ interpretation), and historical explications which point to Nero or Vespasian and Titus, or, in the case of Jewish interpretations, to the period from Vespasian to Hadrian. None of these historical interpretations refers to Antiochus IV. Jerome himself, however, does not defend an interpretation which identifies the abomination of desolation as a future activity of the antichrist; he clearly leaves open the possibility that the prophecy has already been fulfilled in the past, although he only presents possibilities in the Roman era.

Jerome does refer to the Hellenistic era in his comments on the phrase “abomination of desolation” in Dan 11:31. To modern scholars, Daniel

11 reads as an increasingly detailed chronology of the conflict between Persia and Greece, the arrival of Alexander the Great on the historical scene, and the further developments of the Hellenistic era, with special attention to the conflict between Antiochus IV and the Jews, the temporary interference of the Romans, the deepening crisis, and—at the beginning of Daniel 12—the definitive intervention by Michael, the archangel. Jerome, however, is convinced that Daniel 11 is mainly concerned with the Roman era, and contains a prediction of the antichrist's activities in the future. Yet he grants that the antichrist's actions, including the installation of the abomination of desolation, have already been prefigured by Antiochus IV. I shall return to this interpretation below, in commenting on the second aspect of Jerome's sophisticated Daniel interpretation, which consists of his differentiation between a historical and a typological understanding of the abomination of desolation. For now it may suffice to note that the "abomination of desolation" has no consistent meaning in Jerome, but depends on the chronological framework in which the relevant chapter is read.

Whereas the abomination of desolation somehow refers to Antiochus in Dan 11:31, Jerome explicitly denies that this is also the case in Dan 12:11. In Jerome's view, Daniel 12, like Daniel 2 and 7, resists a Hellenistic interpretation. The chapter speaks about the intervention of the archangel Michael, "the protector of your people," and prophecies that after a time of anguish the resurrection will take place (Dan 12:1–3). At the end of the chapter, in the final words of an angel addressed to Daniel, reference is made to the abomination of desolation: "From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days" (Dan 12:11). According to Jerome, this reference to 1,290 days, i.e., 3.5 years, cannot possibly be a reference to the period during which the Jerusalem temple was defiled by Antiochus IV. The reason for this, as Jerome points out, is that both Josephus and 1 Maccabees mention a period of three years for the temple's violated state:

Porphyry asserts that these 1,290 days were completed in Antiochus' time and in the desolation of the temple, whereas Josephus and the book of the Maccabees do not give but three years to this incident. Because of this, it is evident that these 3.5 years belong to the era of the antichrist, who will persecute the saints . . . From the time of the *endelechismos*, i.e. during the time of the cessation of the perpetual sacrifice, when the antichrist, the ruler of the world, will have forbidden the worship of God, until the death of this antichrist, 3.5 years or 1,290 days will be completed. (4.12.8–10, 942.657–943.669; includes Berchman, frg. 91)

And indeed, according to both 1 Maccabees and Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* the duration of the desecration of the temple is three years (see 1 Macc 1:57; 4:52; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 12.248, 319–321), although in his *Jewish War* Josephus does speak of a period of 3.5 years (*Jewish War* 1.32). Jerome needs to take Porphyry's criticism very seriously, and for that reason occupies himself with the most minute details of the chronology of the Hellenistic period. In some cases Jerome proves to be right and Porphyry's reasoning wrong or unsatisfactory,¹⁵ but Jerome's argument that the 3.5 years mentioned in Dan 12:11 cannot possibly apply to the events under Antiochus IV sounds very artificial.

In comparison to Hippolytus, however, who, without further argumentation, differentiates between two kinds of abomination, the abomination of destruction which Antiochus established locally, and the abomination of desolation which the antichrist will perform universally, Jerome's reply is characterized by a sophisticated chronology. In his view, depending on the relevant chapter in Daniel, the phrase “abomination of desolation” refers either to the activities of the antichrist in the Roman era (Dan 9:27; 12:11) or, at least partially, to those of Antiochus in the Hellenistic era (Dan 11:31). To argue this, Jerome needs not only a chronological framework, but also, as I shall now show in some detail, a differentiation between a historical and a typological methodology of interpretation. This establishes a second distinctive characteristic of Jerome's interpretation of Daniel.

Jerome's historical and typological understanding of the “abomination of desolation”

With regard to the occurrence of “abomination of desolation” in Dan 11:31, Jerome grants that the phrase may refer, in a typological way, to the events under Antiochus. The first part of Daniel 11 was treated by Jerome as part of Hellenistic history anyway. This is difficult to deny for Jerome, since the text itself explicitly mentions the confrontation of Persia and Greece:

Now I will announce the truth to you. Three more kings shall arise in Persia. The fourth shall be far richer than all of them, and when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece. (Dan 11:2)

Jerome does not dispute the references in the ensuing chronology to Alexander the Great: “Perspicue de magno Alexandro rege Macedonum

¹⁵ See Cook, *The Interpretation of the Old Testament*, 223, 225, 235–237, 239, 243–244.

loquitur" (3.11.3-4a, 899.855-856). In Jerome's view, however, the developing line of Greek Hellenistic history only runs up to and including Dan 11:20 when, from Jerome's perspective, the continuous chronological development is interrupted in the time of Seleucus IV Philopator (ca. 218-175 BC), the second son of Antiochus III the Great (ca. 242-187 BC), and continues, from Dan 11:21 onwards, in the time of the antichrist. Until Dan 11:21, Jerome emphasizes, there is indeed no difference between him and Porphyry in their interpretation of Daniel 11 in terms of Hellenistic history:

Until this point the historical order has been followed, and there has been no point of contention between Porphyry and us. But the remainder of the document, from here [i.e. from Dan 11:21] to the end of the volume [i.e. to the end of Daniel 12], he interprets as referring to the person of Antiochus, who was surnamed Epiphanes, brother of Seleucus, and Antiochus the Great's son. He ruled Syria for eleven years after Seleucus, and he seized Judea. God's law was persecuted under him, and the Maccabean war occurred. Our own authors, however, judge that everything which follows was prophesied about the antichrist, who must come at the end of time. (4.11.21, 914.3-12; includes Berchman, frg. 84)

To the objection that it seems odd that in this way there would be such a spacious interval between Seleucus IV and the end of time, Jerome answers, among other considerations, that

if it is true that there are a great number of details, which we could read and explain, that fit the figure of Antiochus [IV] so well, it is because the Scriptures wished to set him up as a *type of the antichrist*, holding that the things that would happen beforehand under him only *partially*, would be *fully* fulfilled in the time of the antichrist. This is a custom of the holy Scriptures that they demonstrate in advance *in particular types* what will truly take place in the future—*cumque multa, quae postea lecturi et exposituri sumus, super Antiochi persona convenient, typum eum volunt fuisse Antichristi, et quae in illo ex parte praecesserint, in Antichristo ex toto esse complenda, et hunc esse morem scripturae sanctae: ut futurorum veritatem praemittat in typis.* (4.11.21, 915.20-24)

In the rest of his commentary on Daniel 11, Jerome continues this historical and typological interpretation of the events under Antiochus IV.

Just as Christ has Solomon and other saints as a type of his arrival, the antichrist is rightly believed to be prefigured in the type of a bad king such as Antiochus IV, who persecuted the saints and profaned the temple—*Sicut igitur Salvator habet et Salomonem et ceteros sanctos in typum adventus sui, sic et Antichristus pessimum regem Antiochum, qui sanctos persecutus est templumque violavit, recte typum sui habuisse credendus est.* (4.11.21, 915.36-39)

With regard to a particular feature of the history of Antiochus as described in Dan 11:29–30, Jerome remarks that

all this happened before in an image under Antiochus Epiphanes, in order that the most criminal king who persecuted the people of God would prefigure the antichrist who is to persecute the people of Jesus Christ—haec autem sub Antiocho Epiphane in imaginem praecesserunt: ut rex sceleratissimus qui persecutus est populum Dei, praefigurer Antichristum qui Christi populum persecuturus est. (4.11.28b–30a, 920.147–150)

Jerome immediately continues this passage by noting that

the cruelty and the incomparable baseness of Domitian or Nero (or: Domitius Nero) has led many of us to believe that one ought to detect in him the antichrist—unde multi nostrorum putant, ob saevitiae et turpitudinis magnitudinem, Domitianum, Neronem, Antichristum fore. (4.11.28b–30a, 920.151–153)

In this way Jerome gives an interesting insight that the dark figure of Daniel 11 was identified by many Christians as Domitian or Nero, or simply as Domitius Nero. Jerome himself, however, refers to Antiochus, who is taken as a prefiguration of the antichrist.

Jerome shows himself also very much aware of the parallels between events mentioned in Daniel 11 and the history of Antiochus as described in 1 Maccabees. As regards the prediction of Dan 11:30 that the adversary of Daniel 11, when forced to withdraw from his attack on Egypt, “shall be enraged and take action against the holy covenant; he shall turn back and pay heed to those who forsake the holy covenant,” Jerome notes that

This is what we clearly read in the tales of the Maccabees (“Haec plenius in Machabaeorum gestis legimus”), that after the Romans had chased Antiochus from Egypt, 1 Maccabees 1, he marched with fury against the covenant of the sanctuary, invited by those who had abandoned the law of God and had participated in pagan ceremonies. All this will be accomplished in a much more complete way under the antichrist (“Quod plenius complendum est sub Antichristo”), who will be indignant against the covenant of God and will devise plans against those whom he wants to abandon the divine law. (4.11.30b, 921.157–163)

In line with this the next verse, Dan 11:31, which contains the reference to the abomination of desolation, is also read with regard to Antiochus:

Forces sent by him shall occupy and profane the temple and fortress. They shall abolish the regular burnt-offering and set up the abomination that makes desolate. (Dan 11:31)

Not only Porphyry reads this passage as a description of Antiochus’

installation of the “abomination of desolation” in the Jerusalem temple. Jerome shares this understanding of the passage although he interprets it both in a historical and a typological way. Jerome clearly grants that Antiochus’ installation of an idol of Zeus in the Jerusalem temple is what the Scriptures call “the abomination of desolation”:

Those of another perspective claim that the persons spoken about are those who were sent by Antiochus two years after he had looted the temple to exact tribute from the Jews. And also to erase reverence for God, he set up an image of Jupiter Olympius in the Temple of Jerusalem, and also statues of Antiochus. Now this is called the abomination of desolation, having been set up when the holocaust and continual sacrifice were abolished. (4.11.31, 921.170–176; Berchman, frg. 88)

Curiously, this opinion of Porphyry includes a detail not found in 1 and 2 Maccabees and Josephus that in addition to an image of Zeus, statues of Antiochus were also set up in the Jerusalem temple. 1 Maccabees speaks simply of the erection of “a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt offering” (1:54; cf. 4:36–61); it is the author of 2 Maccabees who implies that an image of Zeus was erected, because he talks of the pollution of the temple in Jerusalem which is transformed into a temple of the Olympian Zeus (6:2). Similarly, Josephus only describes the activities of Antiochus as spoiling the temple and preventing the sacrifices from being offered for three years (*Jewish Antiquities* 10.275–276), forbidding the Jews “to offer the daily sacrifices which they used to offer to God in accordance with their law” (12.251), and building a pagan altar upon the temple altar (12.253). It is only in 2 Macc 6:2, thus, that the abomination of desolation is linked to Zeus, but statues of Antiochus are not mentioned anywhere. Porphyry’s mention of them seems to be a conflation with the events under Caligula, when an image of this emperor was due to be set up in the Jerusalem temple (see Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium*). Jerome accepts Porphyry’s description of the actions of Antiochus as historically accurate, but again supplements it with a typological interpretation, according to which Antiochus prefigures the antichrist. The latter is described in more detail in language derived from 2 Thessalonians:

Our own people maintain that all this went before in a type of the antichrist (“Quae uniuersa in typo Antichristi nostri praecessisse contendunt”), who was determined to set himself in the temple of God and to pretend to be God (cf. 2 Thess 2:3–4). (4.11.31, 921.176–922.178)

At the same time, Jerome gives interesting insights into what might be regarded as contemporary Jewish exegesis:

The Jews, however, wish to understand this passage not with regard to Antiochus Epiphanes, nor with regard to the antichrist, but with regard to the Romans or the Italians . . . After a long time, from among these Romans, who came to the recourse of Ptolemy and threatened Antiochus with an attack, there will arise king Vespasian. His arms and seed will rise, and Titus his son, with his army, will pollute the sanctuary and cause the perpetual sacrifice to cease, and hand the temple over to an eternal solitude. (4.11.31, 922.178–185)

Although, as J. Braverman has shown, this Jewish exegesis seems not to have been recorded in rabbinical literature, it is likely that Jerome, who commanded the Hebrew language and lived in Palestine is aware of Jewish exegetical traditions.¹⁶ This also applies to the following passage in Dan 11:32–33, which narrates how those who remain loyal to their God and stand firm against the figure who sets up the abomination of desolation “fall by sword and flame, and suffer captivity and plunder.”¹⁷ According to “the Hebrews” this passage concerns the final destruction of the temple under Vespasian and Titus (4.11.33, 923.205–207). The subsequent remark in Dan 11:34 that “When they fall victim, they shall receive a little help,” is then interpreted by some Jews, according to Jerome, in view of the more positive attitude of some later Roman emperors:

Some of the Hebrews understand this with regard to the emperors Severus and Antoninus,¹⁸ who very much liked the Jews. Others apply it to the emperor Julian, in this sense that when they were suppressed by Gaius Caligula and had suffered great difficulties in captivity, Julian arose; he pretended to love the Jews and caused them to expect sacrifices in their temple. (4.11.34–35, 924.228–234)

The reason that Jerome adduces these Jewish interpretations seems to be that he wants to show that, unlike Porphyry, both Jews and Christians connect particular prophecies of Daniel with the Roman era. At the same time the grounds on which Jerome acknowledges that these predictions have already been (partially) fulfilled in the time of Antiochus

¹⁶ J. Braverman, *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel: A Study of Comparative Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Hebrew Bible* (CBQMS 7; Washington, D.C., 1978), 115–118.

¹⁷ Cf. Cook, *The Interpretation of the Old Testament*, 230 n. 442, with reference to Braverman, *Jerome's Commentary*, 120–123.

¹⁸ For the identification of these emperors, cf. Cook, *The Interpretation of the Old Testament*, 230 n. 442: Alexander Severus, AD 222–235, and an unidentifiable emperor.

seem to consist in the evidence provided by 1 Maccabees. Time and again, after Jerome has given Porphyry's interpretation of a Danielic passage, he clarifies that "we read this in the book of the Maccabees": "Et hoc in Machabaeis legimus" (4.11.31, 922.191).¹⁹ It seems that Porphyry himself is already referring to 1 Maccabees.²⁰ Embedded in his interpretation of Dan 11:34–35 we find the exhortation to read the books of the Maccabees, followed by the remark that by that account all these things have already taken place: "lege Machabaeorum libros; haec autem omnia idcirco sunt facta" (4.11.34–35, 923.219–220). For this reason we can surmise that it is Porphyry's dependence on 1 Maccabees in his exegesis of Daniel which makes it impossible for Jerome to ignore either 1 Maccabees or Josephus (see, e.g. 4.12.1–3, 936.501–502) and causes him to take an interpretation of Daniel against the background of Hellenistic history very seriously indeed. At the same time, throughout his interpretation of Dan 11:21–45, Jerome continues his typological reading of the events because he is not satisfied that all details of the section can be subsumed under a historical reading.

It is important to note that, in Jerome's exegetical methodology, a passage which can be elucidated through a historical interpretation does not necessarily have a double, typological meaning. This becomes apparent from Jerome's comments on Daniel 8, the vision of the Persian ram which is struck by the Hellenistic goat, which is only interpreted in a historical way with regard to the Hellenistic era, without any further typological interpretation. Of course Jerome is obliged to take this view, because Gabriel's interpretation of the vision explicitly mentions Greece: "the male goat is the king of Greece, and the great horn between its eyes is the first king" (Dan 8:21). This holds true for all three instances in Daniel where Greece is mentioned explicitly (Dan 8:21; 10:20; 11:2). In the same way, Jerome offers an exclusively historical interpretation of Daniel 10 (the vision of the conflict of nations and heavenly powers) in terms of Hellenistic chronology. For the same reason, the first section of Daniel

¹⁹ See, as far as the interpretation of Daniel 11 is concerned, also 4.11.30b, 921.157: "Haec plenius in Machabaeorum gestis legimus"; 4.11.33, 923.200–201: "Quanta Iudaei passi sint ab Antiocho, Machabaeorum libri referunt."

²⁰ Cf. Cook, *The Interpretation of the Old Testament*, 193: "Though he [i.e. Jerome] does not say that Porphyry claimed to have used Josephus, it is quite clear that Porphyry knew of Josephus' work. In his work on abstinence, Porphyry mentions the persecution under Antiochus and then includes a description of the Essenes. He mentions three of Josephus' major works: the *Jewish War*, *Against Apion*, and the *Antiquities*. The importance of Josephus for Porphyry's interpretation of Daniel should not be underrated."

11 is explained in a fully historical way with reference to the events of the Hellenistic era. Although Jerome’s attention for the Greek-Hellenistic setting of Daniel 8, 10, and the first part of 11 was triggered by the explicit mention of Greece in the Danielic text, there were Christian exegetes who chose to ignore such chronological indications. Jerome himself remarks that even in the case of Daniel 8, which the Danielic author himself links to the Hellenistic age, the majority of Christian exegetes interpret the events in a futuristic way with reference to the antichrist. Jerome himself, however, does not agree with their approach. With regard to the prediction of Dan 8:23–24 about the emergence of “a king of bold countenance,” “skilled in intrigue,” who will “grow strong in power and cause fearful destruction,” Jerome states that the prophecy was fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes who,

in his war against the Jews, after the conquest of Judea, entered Jerusalem, and established the statue of Olympian Zeus—*contra Iudaeos dimicans, capta Iudaea, ingressus est Hierosolymam et in templo Dei simulacrum Iovis Olympii statuit.* (2.8.9b–12, 854.848–850)

The question of Dan 8:13, “For how long is this vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled?” is interpreted in this chronological context:

One angel asks another until when God would permit, in the reign of Antiochus of Syria, the temple to be desolated and the image of Zeus to be maintained in the holy place—*Unus angelus interrogat alterum angelum: usque ad quod tempus Dei iudicio sub Antiocho rege Syriae templum futurum sit desolatum et simulacrum Iovis staturum in templo Dei.* (2.8.13b, 855.873–876)

The answer of the other angel, to the effect that God will permit this “[f]or two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be purified” (Dan 8:14), is interpreted by Jerome on the basis of 1 Maccabees and Josephus:

Let us read the books of the Maccabees and the history of Josephus (“*Legamus Machabaeorum libros et Iosephi historiam*”), and we will find that (1) in the 143rd year after Seleucus, who reigned as the first ruler in Syria after Alexander, Antiochus entered Jerusalem, pillaged everything, returned three years later, and placed the statue of Zeus in the temple (“*in templo posuisse statuam Iovis*”), as well as that (2) until Judas the Maccabee, i.e. until the 148th year, through the six years of the desolation of Jerusalem, of which the three years of the profanation of the temple were part, there passed 2,300 days and three months, after which the temple was purified. (2.8.14, 855.879–856.888)

Jerome deliberately states that his interpretation of Daniel 8 is not shared by the majority of Christian interpreters, but this notwithstanding, he himself is convinced that the purification of the temple mentioned in Dan 8:14 took place under Judas the Maccabee:

The majority of us link this passage with the antichrist, and they say that what happened under Antiochus as a type of the future will be accomplished in reality under the antichrist. But these words, "the sanctuary shall be purified," point to the time of Judas the Maccabee—*Hunc locum plerique nostrorum ad Antichristum referent, et quod sub Antiocho in typo factum est, sub illo in ueritate dicunt esse complendum. Quod autem infer: Mundabitur sanctuarium, Iudae Machabaei signifcat tempora.* (2.8.14, 856.890–894)

Interestingly, Jerome here criticizes the majority view, which advocates interpreting the vision of Daniel 8 not only in a historical sense, but also in a typological way: "what happened under Antiochus as a type of the future will be accomplished in reality under the antichrist." Jerome rejects this view because, in this particular case, a historical interpretation with regard to the Hellenistic past is sufficient.²¹ From Jerome's exegesis of Daniel 8, it is apparent that, according to Jerome, a historical reading cannot always be supplemented with a typological one.

Such a necessity, however, does exist in the exegesis of Daniel 11 because, in Jerome's view, the details of this vision are not sufficiently explained with reference to Antiochus, although he is certainly implied. The subject matter is not addressed in full unless one also explores the typological dimension. For this reason, Jerome emphasizes in his comments on Daniel 11 that a typological interpretation explains many aspects of this vision better and more appropriately: "Nostrum autem et melius interpretantur et rectius" (4.11.21, 917.73–74). This typological interpretation shows how everything will be accomplished more completely under the antichrist—"Quod plenius complendum est sub Antichristo" (4.11.30b, 921.161). Depending on one's exact understanding of the text, Jerome admits, it is easier to apply it to Antiochus or to the antichrist (4.11.37–39, 927.294–928.309). Some peculiarities only partly

²¹ This is not sufficiently recognized by Courtray, "Der Danielkommentar," 145, who writes: "Interessanterweise lehnt Hieronymus die Lektüre des neuplatonischen Philosophen nicht gänzlich ab. Seine Argumente seien überzeugend: Bestimmte Passagen könnten in der Tat auf Antiochus Epiphanes Anwendung finden. Aber diese Lesart ist überaus reduzierend, sie berichtet nicht über die wahre Tragweite des Textes: Über Antiochus ist von dem Antichrist die Rede." This is not true, however, for Jerome's interpretation of Daniel 8.

(“ex parte”) apply to Antiochus but are better suited to the figure of the antichrist (4.11.42–43, 930.364–367).

Until the very end of Daniel 11, Jerome deliberates whether a historical interpretation of the chapter is exhaustive, as he argued for Daniel 8, or whether the passage harbours an additional meaning. In the end, Jerome concludes that the contents of Daniel 11 are not essential for a Christian application of the book of Daniel to the Roman era. Other chapters, however, resist the restriction of the book’s relevance to the Hellenistic period. In these instances it is possible to extend it into the present, Roman era. The justification for this is offered, in Jerome’s view, by Daniel’s visions about the stone, the son of man, and the resurrection of the dead in chapters 2, 7, and 12 respectively; these chapters talk of a universal, eternal kingdom of God, and thus cannot possibly refer to the Jewish Maccabean kingdom which proved short-lived. Even if Porphyry had shown convincingly that Daniel 11 applies to Antiochus, and not at all to the antichrist, that would not harm the Christian religion in the slightest. The vision of the ram and the goat in Daniel 8 was also fully fulfilled by Antiochus, and left no room for an additional reference to the antichrist. For this reason, Jerome’s final answer to Porphyry is that he should pay attention to what is evident,²² which is that the prophecies about a universal, indestructible kingdom have not been fulfilled in the history of the Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman eras (4.11.44–45, 932.403–422).

3. *Concluding Observations*

In the last instance, thus, Jerome not only argues that the referents of the phrase “abomination of desolation” are both, historically speaking, Antiochus, and, typologically speaking, the antichrist, but even comes close to conceding to Porphyry that the purely historical interpretation of the abomination of desolation in Dan 11:31 in terms of Antiochus’ desecration of the Jerusalem temple is possibly exhaustive. Yet, as we have seen, in Dan 9:27 and Dan 12:11 the phrase is used of the activities of the antichrist. However, given that many Christian interpreters favour an exclusively futuristic interpretation of this phrase with regard to the antichrist, it is Jerome’s deep awareness of its applicability to the events

²² Cf. Cook, *The Interpretation of the Old Testament*, 238–239.

under Antiochus IV which is remarkable. In this, as we have seen, Jerome resembles Josephus and Hippolytus before him. The challenges posed by Porphyry's criticism of Danielic exegesis are evident in the far more sophisticated way in which Jerome needs to argue.

The same double application of the phrase "abomination of desolation" to both the figure of Antiochus in the past, and to the antichrist in the future, which we found in Hippolytus and Jerome, also occurs in a brief passage of the latter's contemporary Cassian (ca. AD 360–ca. 435). Just as Elijah prefigures both John the Baptist and Christ (see Mark 9:11–13; Mal 3:23–24 MT; 4:5–6 English trans.), the "abomination of desolation" points to both Antiochus and the antichrist, according to Cassian. These cases demonstrate the double sense in which holy Scripture may be taken:

quale est illud, quod Helias venerit in Iohanne et iterum sit adventum domini praecursurus, et de abominatione desolationis, quod steterit in loco sancto per illud simulacrum Iovis quod Hierosolymis in templo positum legimus et iterum stare habeat in ecclesia per adventum Antichristi, illa que omnia quae in evangelio sequuntur, quae et inpleta ante captivitatem Hierosolymorum et in fine mundi huius intelleguntur inplenda (Cassian, *Conlationes*, 8.4, p. 221).—As in this case: where Elias came in the person of John, and is again to be the precursor of the Lord's Advent; and in the matter of the "Abomination of desolation" which "stood in the holy place", by means of that idol of Jupiter which, as we read, was placed in the temple in Jerusalem, and which is again to stand in the Church through the coming of antichrist, and all those things which follow in the gospel, which we take as having been fulfilled before the captivity of Jerusalem and still to be fulfilled at the end of this world. (Trans. E.C.S. Gibson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*)

In Cassian's view, the abomination of desolation refers both to the statue of Zeus erected in the Jerusalem temple under Antiochus IV, and to the events in the church upon the arrival of the antichrist. As we have seen, the same view on the double sense of holy Scripture is also found in Jerome. Together with Josephus and Hippolytus, Jerome and Cassian represent a minority view among early Jews and Christians, by holding that the first referent of the term "abomination of desolation" remained Antiochus' desecration of the holy temple in Jerusalem.

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Studies in Honour of Ed Noort

Edited by

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Supplements
to
Vetus Testamentum

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