Mustafa Ada Kök

ANTICHRIST IN PURPLE:

ECCLESIASTICAL INVECTIVES AGAINST CONSTANTIUS II

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies.

Central European University Private University

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Antichrist in Purple:

Ecclesiastical Invectives against Constantius II

by

Mustafa Ada Kök

(Turkey)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University Private University, Vienna, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Examiner

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External Reader

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External Supervisor

I, the undersigned, **Mustafa Ada Kök**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

The thesis analyzes the association between Christian Roman Emperor Constantius II and the Antichrist in the invectives written by Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers, and Lucifer of Cagliari. In their criticism of the emperor, the three Nicene bishops jointly call Constantius the precursor to or *the* Antichrist himself. In the present study, I explore the biblical and exegetical source for such an allegation and the ways in which the Antichrist typology is employed against Constantius' non-Nicene ecclesiastical policies during the mid-fourth century. I argue that such accusations are more than "empty rhetoric." By using biblical imagery, the Nicene bishops deliberately present Constantius and his "Arian" supporters as fulfilling the eschatological prophecies of persecution of God's people, the "Orthodox" Nicene community. Even more, the thesis puts the use of the Antichrist typology in the broader literary context of the fourth century alongside the panegyrical discourses where eschatological rhetoric is used. I assert that as a response to the changing historical circumstances in roughly the first half of the fourth century, eschatological discourses became a rhetorical tool both to praise or vilify certain individuals and groups.

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INTRODUCTION

> Florentius, to the kindest Lord Lucifer.
>
> In your name, someone presented a book to our Lord and Augustus; he ordered this book to be delivered to your Holiness, and wants to know, if the same book was sent by you. Therefore, you should write down the truth in faith and send the book so that it can be presented to his eternity again.
>
> *Letter of Florentius to Bishop Lucifer*[1]

> Bishop Lucifer to *Magister Officiorum* Florentius.
>
> The bearer of the book, whom Your Honor mentions as having approached the emperor, was sent by my humbleness, the book itself, as you were deigned to remind, was carefully inspected and handed over to be conveyed to Bonosus […] When he [Constantius] begins to inquire why I wrote in such a manner, he will find [them].
>
> *Letter of Lucifer to Florentius*[2]

The passage quoted above is an excerpt from the epistolary correspondence between Lucifer of Cagliari (d. 370 CE), the exiled bishop of Sardinia, and Florentius, the *magister officiorum* of the emperor Constantius II (317 – 361 CE). Florentius asks Lucifer whether the book sent to the emperor under Lucifer's name indeed belongs to him. In his reply, Lucifer affirms that he is the author and sends the book again. With the assumption that these letters are indeed genuine and such a correspondence did take place,[3] then it is not unlikely that the book in question is one of Lucifer's highly polemical writings against Constantius. However,

[1] *Epistvla Florentii ad Lvcifervm Episcopvm*, V 321 in G. F. Diercks (ed.), L*uciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt* (CCSL 8, 1978), 1-7, 305: "Domino Benignissimo Lvcifero Florentivs. Nomine tuo codicem quidam domino et augusto nostro obtulit; hunc ad sanctitatem tuam perferri mandauit et cognoscere desiderat, si idem codex a te destinatus sit. Id ergo, quod in fide ueri est, perscribere debebis et codicem remittere, ut possit aeternitati eius denuo offerri."

[2] *Epistvla Lvciferi ad Florentivm*, V 322, in G. F. Diercks (ed.), L*uciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt* (CCSL 8, 1978), 1-6, 10-11, 305: "Florentio Magistro Officiorvm Lvcifer Episcopvs.
Codicis perlatorem, quem memorat honorificentia tua nominee adisse imperatorem, a mea fuisse destinatum mediocritate, ipsum quoque codicem, ut es admonere dignatus, sollicite inspectum atque Bonoso in rebus agenti perferendum traditum, […] cum causas cur tali scripserim modo discutere coeperit, inueniet."

[3] Jerome states that Lucifer sent a polemical writing against Constantius to the emperor himself. See Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, 95 in Thomas P. Halton (tr), *St. Jerome: On Illustrious Men* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 127-128.

Lucifer was not alone in composing polemical works against the emperor. Other exiled Nicene bishops, Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 297 – 373 CE) and Hilary of Poitiers (c. 310 – c. 367 CE), too, wrote invectives. In their criticism of the emperor's non-Nicene ecclesiastical policies, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer all jointly associated Constantius with the figure of the Antichrist. Consequently, in the present thesis, I explore what it means to associate the figure of the Antichrist with a still-living Christian Roman emperor. In this premise, I answer the following research questions: What is the authoritative source in the biblical and exegetical pre-Constantinian Christian literature for associating a Christian Roman Emperor with the figure of the Antichrist? How does the Antichrist accusation function in these invectives, and what does it indicate in the context of mid-fourth century ecclesiastical politics? What is the greater significance and implications of associating a still-living Christian Roman Emperor with the Antichrist after the so-called "Constantinian turn" in the fourth century?

Sources and Methodology

I provide an answer to each of these questions individually in the three consecutive chapters of this thesis. In the first chapter, I investigate what the figure of the Antichrist might have meant to a Christian audience acquainted with the Christian Scriptures and their exegetical tradition and what might have been the source for linking the Antichrist figure with the person of a Roman emperor. In this premise, I look into what I call "prophetical literature" and the exegetical writings of Christian authors in the first four centuries of the Common Era. By "prophetical literature," I not only refer to the prophetical writings, like Sibylline Oracles, the Book of Daniel, and that of Revelation but also to the prophetical passages found in the Gospels, such as the so-called "Olivet Discourse" from the synoptic Gospels (Mark 13, Matthew 24-25, Luke 21), apostolic letters of 1 John and 2 Thessalonians. Based on this mostly biblical "prophetical" corpus, I also explore the various interpretations of the Christian *litterati* on the figure of the Antichrist. These mainly include but are not limited to the exegetical and polemical

writings of Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130 – c. 200 CE), Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170 – c. 236 CE), Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 225 CE), Victorinus of Pettau (d. c. 304), Lactantius (c. 240 – c. 320 CE), and Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315 – 386 CE).

In my handling of the ancient pieces of literature mentioned above, I offer a political reading of the development of the Antichrist legend in particular and Christian eschatology in general concerning the surrounding historical circumstances in which these texts were written. Then, I suggest a place and role for the Antichrist figure in a common "plotline" of what the "future" might have held in ancient Christian eschatological understanding. For this purpose, I borrow the term "common political-eschatological scenario" from Christopher Bonura's PhD dissertation.[4] Besides some interpretive differences found in the writings of the Christian authors above, this term provides the eschatological framework in which the contemporary events found their meaning and place in the larger Christian "History of Salvation." However, it should also be noted that the political reading I am offering rules out some other writings that instead suggest tropological and/or anagogical (i.e., moral and/or spiritual) interpretations. In addition, in his study on George of Pisidia's *Hexaemeron*, Paul M. Blowers argues that political and cultural historians of Byzantium treated George's *Hexaemeron* as a self-standing panegyric for the emperor Heraclius' victory over the Sassanid Persians in the seventh century and stresses the antecedent commentary tradition that lays behind its composition.[5] Taking a similar approach, I offer a synoptic view of the making of "Antichristology" in the early Church. By doing so, I emphasize the previous exegetical tradition on the ambiguous figure of the Antichrist and highlight how the Nicene bishops Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer relied on the biblical and

[4] Christopher Bonura, "The Roman Empire of the Apocalypse: History, Eschatology, and the Four Kingdoms of Daniel in Late Antiquity, the Early Medieval Middle East, and Byzantium," PhD diss., (University of California, Berkeley, 2019).
[5] Paul M. Blowers, "George of Pisidia Among the Hexaemeral Commentators," in Reinhart Ceulemans, Barbara Crostini (eds), *Receptions of the Bible in Byzantium: Texts, Manuscripts, and their Readers* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2021), 63-77.

exegetical tradition and, at the same time, came up with their own "creative" interpretations in response to the contemporary ecclesiastical politics.

In the second chapter, I zoom into the invectives against the person and ecclesiastical policies of Constantius II. Namely, these sources are listed as follows: *Historia Arianorum* (History of the Arians), written by Athanasius of Alexandria in late 357, *In Constantium* (Against Constantius), written by Hilary of Poitiers in 360, and *De Athanasio I* (Concerning Athanasius), *De non Parcendo in Deum Delinquentibus* (On Not Sparing Those Who Commit Offences Against God), and *Moriundum esse pro Dei Filio* (The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God), written by Lucifer of Cagliari between the years 359 – 360. To be precise, meanwhile, *Against Constantius* and *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God* are literary invectives addressing the emperor directly in the second person singular, the *History of the Arians* is more of a historical narrative. Also, *Concerning Athanasius* is rather Lucifer's defense of Athanasius, but it still addresses Constantius directly. Still, both the *History of the Arians* and *Concerning Athanasius* are highly critical of Constantius and his ecclesiastical policies. Therefore, I regard them too as "invective" literary discourses and incorporate them into this thesis.

Many other villainous biblical characters appear in these invectives and are linked with Constantius in one way or another. Nevertheless, for the present thesis, I mainly focus on the charges that present Constantius as *the* or "precursor" to the Antichrist. The reasons for this are threefold. The first is rather practical, considering the spatial and temporal limitations of an MA thesis. The second is my personal academic interest in Christian eschatology. Last but not least is the fact that the figure of the Antichrist is one of the few biblical characters that appear jointly in all these invectives mentioned above. After all, this is not to offer a reductionist perspective to these sources. On the contrary, by singling out this single figure, I aim to demonstrate how

culturally and politically loaded the Antichrist reference may be and how it functions as a rhetorical tool in convening a message.

I should also say a few words about my treatment of the model of the Antichrist in these invectives. I do not take the association of the Antichrist with Constantius literally. Instead, following Claudia Rapp's study titled "Old Testament Models for Emperors in Early Byzantium,"[6] I prefer to use the term "typology" throughout the thesis. The employment of the Antichrist typology in the invectives indicates a partial fulfillment of the biblical prophecy in the person of Constantius, drawing the eschatological future near the historical present. Further, as a Christian hermeneutical strategy, it displays the emperor's "heretical" deeds and career through biblical lenses through which contemporary ecclesiastical politics are interpreted. Such a rhetorical construction serves to simplify the complexity and "greyness" of the present reality and present the biblical "Other," the enemy of God, in plain terms.

In the third chapter, I put the Antichrist typology found in the invectives in a broader fourth century literary and historical context. This includes both panegyrical and invective literary discourses in which eschatological rhetoric is employed. Consequently, the range of source material mainly consists of but is not limited to, Eusebius" panegyrical Constantinian writings, like the *Life of Constantine* and *Tricennial Oration*, Philostorgius" depiction of Constantius, Cyril of Jerusalem's *Epistle to Constantius,* apologetic writings of Athanasius and Hilary, namely *Defense before Constantius* and *To the Emperor Constantius*. These will be accompanied by two other sources that I use as complementary material in demonstrating the usage of rhetorical eschatology in the fourth century. The first is a Donatist martyrological writing, the *Passion of Marculus*, while the other is Ephrem the Syrian's *Hymns against Julian*.

[6] Claudia Rapp, "Old Testament Models for Emperors in Early Byzantium," in *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, ed. R. Nelson, P. Magdalino (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2010), 175–197.

Building upon the approach of typological interpretation, I examine the use of rhetoric of eschatology in roughly the first half of the fourth century. I regard the reactions to contemporary events, especially their expression in an eschatological framework, as demonstrative of the deliberate positioning of the Roman emperor in the teleologically oriented Christian "History of Salvation." Nonetheless, I do not intend to come up with either a grand narrative of anti or pro-imperial Christian eschatology or Church and Empire relations. I am inclined to interpret the eschatological rhetoric in the panegyrical and invective literary discourses as reactions to given historical circumstances. All of this may seem like an ambitious attempt, but I believe such an approach contributes to our understanding of the close interplay between theological and rhetorical discourses within an eschatological framework in the ecclesiastical politics, first and foremost, of the fourth century and Late Antiquity in general.

Literature Review

The earliest scholarship was not really appreciative of the invectives written by Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer against Constantius. To illustrate, in his edition of Athanasius' works, Robertson remarked, "There are certainly many passages which one could wish that Athanasius had not written, –one, not necessary to specify, in which he fully condescends to the coarse brutality of the age, mingling it unpardonably with holy things."[7] Unfortunately, this dismissive attitude has been shared by some others and expressed in their works. Setton called Lucifer a "man of courage," but also stated that "In all the patristic literature of the fourth century that has come down to us I doubt very much whether anything so dull as these five scurrilous pamphlets of Lucifer against the Emperor Constantius can be found. When the first surprise and amusement at his manner of addressing the Emperor have passed, they are dreary

[7] A. Robertson, *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol.4, (Oxford, 1892), 732.

reading."[8] Even in a more recent study, Hanson complained about Lucifer's invective for its "shrill monotone of abuse," and called them "frenzied rantings."[9] Regrettably, the earlier scholars did not take the invectives seriously and appreciate their literary and historical value. But such "scurrilous" "abuses" "mingling with holy things" should not be overlooked so easily, because they have weight and contain value judgments.

Fortunately, such dismissive attitudes toward these invectives have changed, particularly in invective literary discourses. In his work titled *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*, Richard Flower presents an excellent literary analysis of the invectives and places them accordingly in the historical context of the late 350s and early 360.[10] His monograph investigates the polemical rhetoric of the period mentioned above and how certain individuals, along with their respective ecclesiastical alliances, were presented. Flower concludes that Athanasius, Lucifer, and Hilary used "freedom of speech" (*παρρησία*) in their denunciation of the "Arian heretics" and their imperial patron Constantius II as the "enemies of God" while depicting themselves as the true possessors of the "Orthodox" succession. In addition to his discussions about the question of "legitimate authority" in the later Roman Empire, it would not be an overstatement that Flower's study offers a "rehabilitation" of the literary discourse of invective as part of epideictic oratory alongside the panegyrical discourse. Elsewhere, Flower provides a beautiful and scholarly translation of the three invectives (*History of the Arians* of Athanasius, *Against Constantius* of Hilary, and The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God of Lucifer), which I use in this thesis. I should also acknowledge that the very title

[8] Kenneth M. Setton, *Christian Attitude towards the Emperor in the Fourth Century: Especially as Shown in Addresses to the Emperor* (New York: Columbia Studies in the Social Sciences 482, 1941), 93.
[9] Richard P. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh, 1988), 323.
[10] Richard Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

of the thesis itself refers to Flower's translation, which was immensely helpful in the completion of this thesis.

Besides the more sympathetic attitude toward the invectives in the more recent scholarship on the late antique literature, to the best of my knowledge, the literary invectives against Constantius have not received enough interest in the modern scholarship on the ancient Christian and/or later Byzantine eschatology. The scholarship still pays almost exclusive attention to panegyrical literary discourses. This is most illustrative in the treatment of Eusebius' Constantinian writings, particularly the *Tricennial Oration* where he associates the appointment of Constantine's sons as Caesar with the eschatological prophecy in the Book of Daniel where the saints of the Most High are prophesized to inherit the heavenly Kingdom of God (Daniel 7:18). The scholarship has treated Eusebius' eschatological remark literally and regarded it as a "realized eschatology," and even more so as an "imperial eschatology." Now, it became a prevailing interpretation that the Byzantines viewed the Christian Roman Empire as the Kingdom of God on earth.[11] For example, in his still influential study on Byzantine and Medieval Orthodox eschatology, Gerhard Podskalsky posed a rigid distinction between "Christian" and "Byzantine" eschatology in which the former awaited the eventual downfall of the earthly order and the establishment of the heavenly order of God, while the latter tried to justify its earthly imperial power. According to this interpretation, in Eusebius' oration, the Roman Empire merged with the Kingdom of Christ.[12] Relying on this argument, Paul Magdalino, after stressing the "gap" between Byzantine imperial ideology and the Christian eschatology, proposes more of a formulation process from the fourth to the sixth centuries

[11] András Kraft, "Byzantine Apocalyptic Literature," in Colin McAllister (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Apocalyptic Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 181.
[12] Gerhard Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie: Die Periodisierung der Weltgeschichte in den vier Grossreichen (Daniel 2 und 7) und dem tausendjährigen Friedensreiche (Apok. 20); Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1972), 12, 101-103.

during which the so-called "imperial eschatology" was established.[13] More recently, Stephen Shoemaker offers an even more assertive argument that, in his own words, "Eusebius here [the *Tricennial Oration*] equates Constantine with Christ, and likewise, the empire with Christ's heavenly Kingdom. In effect, the coming kingdom of God that Christ promised has now been realized, according to Eusebius, in the Roman Empire."[14] In all these interpretations, Eusebius' *Tricennial Oration* stands out as the defining turning point of Christian eschatology with its introduction of the concept of "imperial eschatology" that equipped the gradually Christianizing imperial order with prophetic approval and ideological justification.

In his recent article, Christopher Bonura objects to the now generally accepted notion of "imperial eschatology."[15] Bonura emphasizes the rhetorical context of Eusebius' *Tricennial Oration*, which has been mostly overlooked in secondary literature. Instead, Bonura offers a more nuanced interpretation by suggesting a typological reading rather than a literal one. According to his argument, for Eusebius, the Roman Empire was not the realized Kingdom of God but an earthly reflection of it. In addition, later in his study, Bonura exposes the problematic aspects of modern scholarship's tendency to contrast the Eusebian and Augustinian (Augustine of Hippo) theological political thoughts as the departing of ways between the totalitarian and absolutist "East" and the "West."[16]

As demonstrated above, the scholarship on ancient Christian and later Byzantine eschatology has paid almost exclusive attention to Eusebius' Constantinian panegyrics and, in the meantime, ignored the Constantian invectives of the Nicene bishops. Therefore, in the

[13] Paul Magdalino, "The History of the Future and Its Uses: Prophecy, Policy and Propaganda," in *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol on His Seventieth Birthday, ed. Roderick Beaton and Charlotte Roueché* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), 10-11.
[14] Stephen J. Shoemaker, *The Apocalypse of Empire: Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 40.
[15] Christopher Bonura, "The Roman Empire, and the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy: Reassessing Byzantine Imperial Eschatology in the Age of Constantine," *Church History* 90 (2021), 509-536.
[16] For further discussion on this, see Christopher Bonura, "The Roman Empire, and the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy," 532-536.

present thesis, I borrow Bonura's typological approach and apply it in my interpretation of the association of the Antichrist model with Constantius. This clearly presents that the Eusebian thought was not the only prevailing interpretation of the status of Christianity in the fourth century. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that I do not intend to proceed in the opposite direction and come up with, so to speak, an Athanasian grand narrative. I firmly believe that the Nicene bishops' accusation of Constantius being *the* or precursor to the Antichrist cannot be dismissed as "empty rhetoric." I regard this as an indicator of the deliberate positioning of the Roman emperor in the teleological understanding of the Christian "History of Salvation" *in response to* the ongoing ecclesiastical policies of the mid-fourth century. All in all, the present thesis deals with the Antichrist accusation against the person and ecclesiastical policies of Constantius and discusses its more significant implications in the fourth century Roman world across the Mediterranean basin.

Chapter 1: The Making of Antichristology in the Early Church

Introduction

The anti-messianic endtime antagonist figures have been a common feature of the so-called "religions of the Book" of Near Eastern origin. Among them, Christianity's eschatological adversary, the Antichrist, has been a focus of both popular and scholarly attention. This resulted in gigantic scholarly literature, which has often argued over the roots of the Antichrist myth and the development of its legend.[17] Nonetheless, the present chapter limits itself to a political-eschatological reading of the figure of the Antichrist and offers a somewhat synoptic view of Christian eschatological literature on the subject during the first centuries of the Common Era until the so-called "Constantinian turn" in the fourth century.[18] By doing so, what the figure of the Antichrist might have meant to an educated Christian audience in the mid-fourth century is explored when the Nicene bishops, specifically Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 297 – 373), Hilary of Poitiers (c. 310 – c. 367) and Lucifer of Cagliari (? – 370) used the figure of Antichrist in a literary way in their criticism against the Roman emperor Constantius II (r. 337 – 361). In this premise, I argue that the figure of the Antichrist, as an antithetical adversary against the person of Christ, was essentially imagined as *the* Threat to the community

[17] To name a few among many, see; Wilhelm Bousset, *Der Antichrist in der Überlieferung des Judentums, des Neuen Testaments und der alten Kirche: ein Beitrag zur Auslegung der Apocalypse*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895), and its English translation used in the thesis, Wilhelm Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore*, trans. by A. H. Keane (London: Hutchinson, 1896); L.J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2021); Gregory C. Jenks, *The Origins and Development of the Antichrist Myth* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991); Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). Bousset's analysis argued for an ancient Near Eastern origin for the legend, reaching back to the Babylonian dragon myth. Also, Peerbolte explores the continuity between Jewish and Christian endtime speculations. On the other hand, Jenks insists that the myth itself should be seen as a distinct Christian tradition. Lastly, McGinn offers a rich survey of the legend reaching up to the present time.

[18] My attention to political reading of early Christian eschatology, and more specifically "Antichristology," de facto excludes certain sources that rather offer tropological and/or anagogical (i.e., moral and/or spiritual) interpretations. I should also note that my political-eschatological interpretation treats biblical and exegetical works as literary pieces of ancient literature with greater attention to respective historical contexts.

of believers. Such a conception, however, found expression in two mainstream interpretative traditions from the prophetical literature and developed further in the church exegesis, either as an internal and/or external threat with respect to the polemical targets and the political-religious landscape of the surrounding historical contexts.[19]

I.1: Many Names of the Antichrist in the Prophetical Literature

Indirect references to an eschatological adversary, later recognized as the "Antichrist" in Christian literature, are dispersed among ancient prophetical literature. A selected number of these that will be investigated in this chapter mainly include, in order, the Book of Daniel from the Old Testament, the Little Apocalypse, also known as the Olivet Discourse, from the synoptic Gospels (Mark 13, Matthew 24-25, Luke 21), some apostolic letters from the New Testament, such as 1 John and 2 Thessalonians, the Book of the Revelation, whose canonicity had been disputed in the Eastern Mediterranean from the third to the seventh centuries, and lastly, some Jewish and Christian interpolations from the Sibylline Oracles. At first glance, it may sound anachronistic to speak of an antichrist before the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, Christian expectation of the end of days derived directly from Jewish end time speculations. Therefore, a brief look at prior Jewish expectations of an apocalyptic adversary is a must to have a comprehensive understanding of the figure of the Antichrist and his assumed eschatological role in the Christian imagination of the *eschaton*.[20]

[19] By prophetical literature, I not only refer to prophetical books, such as the Book of Daniel and Revelation, but also prophetical passages found in the gospels, even though the gospels themselves can be classified as biographical discourses rather than prophetical.

[20] It should be noted that the figure of Armilus (a Jewish Antichrist) is a later Medieval development, and Jewish eschatology did not have an Antichrist-like endtime apocalyptic adversary figure, at least until the composition of the Book of Daniel. For more details on Armilus, see; Kaufmann Kohler, Louis Ginzberg, "Armilus," in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1789-armilus (date accessed: March 9, 2024).

To begin with, the Book of Daniel, its four-kingdom schema, and the four beasts found in Daniel 2 and 7 played crucial roles in developing Jewish (and later Christian) eschatology.[21] The figure of an end time apocalyptic adversary appears between chapters 7-12. Daniel 7 narrates a vision of Daniel that he saw in his dream. There appear four beasts from the sea (in order lion, bear, and leopard), and the fourth beast is said to be "terrifying and frightening and very powerful" (7:7) as it stands out from the other beasts with its ten horns. The beast also has an eleventh, little horn that has eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that speaks boastfully (7:8). Later in the chapter (7:23-28), the fourth beast is interpreted to be the fourth earthly kingdom that "will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it." The ten horns are said to be the ten kings coming from the fourth kingdom, and among them, another king (the little horn) will rise and subdue three other kings. This eleventh king (the little horn) will blasphemy against the Most High and oppress his holy people while trying to change the seasons and the laws. Finally, the kingdom of the little horn is prophesized to be destroyed and replaced by the Kingdom of the Most High.

The Book of Daniel was supposedly written during the period of the Babylonian Exile by Daniel himself, a sage serving in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar. His visions between 7-12, however, closely resemble the historical circumstances of Judea between 167 – 164 BCE, when a bloody conflict occurred between anti-Hellene Maccabees, pro-Hellene Jews, and the Hellene Seleucids.[22] After hearing the rumors of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes' death during the sixth Syrian War (170 – 168 BCE) against the Ptolemaic Hellenes,[23] anti-Hellene faction of the Jewish priesthood tried to seize the office of pro-Hellene High Priest.

[21] This has already been well acknowledged in the scholarship. For instance, see; Alexandria Frisch, *The Danielic Discourse on Empire in Second Temple Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).
[22] For a more detailed account of the events, see; Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, tr. S. Applebaum (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society and the Magnes Press, the Hebrew University, 1959).
[23] For instance, the conflict between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties are narrated in Daniel 11, as the warring kings of the South and the North.

Seeing this as an open rebellion against his rule, King Antiochus (c. 215 BCE – 164 CE) intervened in the affair, resulting in the capture and sack of Jerusalem and the Temple in 169 BCE. Following this, the Seleucid king Antiochus ordered the ban of Jewish rites and even erected an altar to Zeus in the Temple. All of these led to what is known as the Maccabean Revolt (167 – 160 BCE), which is narrated in the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees in the Jewish Scripture.

Furthermore, the historicity of Daniel's visions did not go unnoticed by the ancient writers. For example, Roman Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (37 – c. 100 CE), in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, says, "And indeed it so came to pass, that our nation suffered these things under Antiochus Epiphanes, according to Daniel's vision, and what he wrote many years before they came to pass. In the very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them."[24] Interestingly, for Josephus, Daniel foretold foreign oppression not only by Seleucid king Antiochus but later by the Romans too. Later, Neoplatonist Porphyry of Tyre (c. 234 – c. 305 CE), in his *Against the Christians,* which survived in Jerome's (c. 342 – 420 CE) *Commentary on Daniel*, denied the authorship of Daniel, and regarded the account not a prophecy but a history:

> Porphyry wrote his twelfth book against the prophecy of Daniel, denying that it was composed by the person to whom it is ascribed in its title, but rather by some individual living in Judea at the time of the Antiochus who was surnamed Epiphanes. He furthermore alleged that "Daniel" did not foretell the future so much as he related the past, and lastly that whatever he spoke of up till the time of Antiochus contained authentic history, whereas anything he may have conjectured beyond that point was false, inasmuch as he would not have foreknown the future.[25]

[24] Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 10.11.7 in William Whiston (tr), *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (A.M. Auburn and Buffalo: John E. Beardsley, 1895).
[25] Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, prologue in Gleason L. Archer (tr), *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1958), 15.

No matter whether the account of Daniel 7-12 was actually prophesized by Daniel himself or was *vaticinium ex eventu* by a later Jewish scribe who witnessed the events, Antiochus IV's persecution and enforcement of pagan worship indeed found expression in the Book of Daniel in an apocalyptic framework.

The persecution by an outsider ruler and the introduction of foreign worship at the expense of the Jewish identity may as well have inspired Daniel 7-12. The apocalyptic adversary little horn reflects the career of King Antiochus IV, while the "abomination of desolation" in Daniel 11 refers to the altar of Zeus in the Temple, as well as the people of the Most High is the Jews as God's chosen people. John J. Collins presents some patterns in the following: I. History before the Antiochus IV Epiphanes' reign can be found in 7:23-27, II. The king's career is depicted as a revolt against God in 7:8, 11, 7:20-21; III. his destruction by divine intervention in 7:9-12, 7:22; IV. Eschatological salvation in 7:13-14, 7:18, 7:22, 7:27, 12:1-3.[26] After all, it seems clear that the memory the Seleucid king left behind became the source of inspiration for the figure of the little horn, turning the historical present time into an eschatological prophecy of the future.

On the other hand, the references to the Antichrist-like figure(s) in the New Testament, with the exception of the Book of Revelation, do not offer an individual end time adversary in the form of an external persecutor tyrant of the community of the faithful as in the case of the little horn from the Book of Daniel. The only reference to an Antichrist-like figure in the Gospels is in John 5:43, where Jesus is reported to say, "I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him." Still, common signs of the end times are present in the Little Apocalypse from the synoptic gospels,

[26] John J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (Missoula Mont: Published by Scholars Press for Harvard Semitic Museum, 1977) 132-133. Also, depending on Collins' analysis, McGinn proposes a similar pattern, see; Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*, ch.1 fn. 49, 286.

also known as the Olivet Discourse. In the gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus talks to his disciples on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple, while in that of Luke, the discourse takes place in the Temple. Jesus talks to his disciples of the signs of the end times, like the persecution of the faithful and rumors of wars, etc., and of the eschatological salvation by the coming of the "Son of Man" (Υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) (Mark 13:26, Matthew 24:27-44, Luke 21:27, 36). He also warns them about the false Christs and false prophets performing great signs and wonders to deceive (Mark 13:22, Matthew 24:24), the many who will say "I am (the Christ)" (Mark 13:16, Matthew 24:5, Luke 21:8), and the expression of "abomination of desolation" from the Book of Daniel (Mark 13:14, Matthew 24:15). According to McGinn, the so-called "abomination of desolation" may refer to the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, just as its mention in the Book of Daniel (11:31, 12:11) was a reference to the altar of Zeus erected by the king Antiochus IV in the Temple.[27] The discourse in its entirety may refer to the sack of Jerusalem by the Romans. Still, in no way these false Christs and prophets are directly related to the prophesized persecution of the faithful or to the coming of the Son of Man. Instead, these figures are styled as an internal threat because they are conceived as deceivers and liars performing false signs.

Similar attributes can be found in apostolic letters. The second epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians addresses the community of believers in Thessalonica about the signs and time of Jesus' return.[28] It objects to the claims that the day of the Lord has arrived and talks about the signs that need to take place before, such as the coming of the "man of lawlessness" (ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας) who will oppose God and sit in the Temple declaring himself to be God

[27] Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist*, 41.

[28] Given the differences between the first and the second epistle to the Thessalonians, its authorship as attributed to Paul has been disputed in modern scholarship. If the author was Paul, the epistle can be dated to the early 50s CE; if not, it was most likely written in the late first to early second century. For more details, see Michael D. Coogan (eds), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Fifth Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 1721-1724.

(2 Thess. 2:1-5). Later, it is added that the coming of the man of lawlessness is delayed by the *katechon*, the "restraining force" (τὸ κατέχον), whose removal will introduce the arrival of the man of lawlessness only to be destroyed by Lord Jesus in his second coming. Here, unlike the false Christs and prophets of the Olivet Discourse, 2 Thessalonians offer an end times adversary as an individual in the *singular*, who is again a pretender, just not of Christ but God, and be removed by the Christ during the *Parousia*.

The first letter of John is the sole writing that bears the name "Antichrist" (ἀντίχριστος) itself. In the epistle, the antichrist is defined as one who denies Jesus is the Christ (2:22), and the spirit of the antichrist as one who denies that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh from God (4:3). The letter addresses the Johannine community divided by schism, and the label "antichrist" here is used to refer to those who departed from the communion. Their departure is even compared to the murder of Abel by his brother Cain (3:12) from the Book of Genesis (4:1-18). Consequently, the author warns the community by indicating that the last hour has come, and *the* Antichrist is coming since "even now many antichrists have come" (1 John 2:18-19). Even though the identity of the polemical target in the letter, i.e., the schismatic antichrists, is not clear,[29] it is evident that the antichrist as a label is used to denote a group identity of schismatics, whose presence signals the coming of *the* Antichrist as one final eschatological adversary.

Last among the books of the New Testament is the Book of Revelation. Its author names himself John living on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea and addresses the seven churches in Asia.[30] In ancient Christian tradition, it was held that the Book of Revelation was composed toward the end of the first century CE. Both Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130 – c. 202 CE) and Jerome

[29] On the possible identity of the schismatics, like a gnostic such as Cerinthus (c. 50—100 CE) and the larger discussion, see Michael D. Coogan (eds), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1789-1796.
[30] For the summary of the discussion regarding its authorship (whether written by John the Evangelist or a certain John of Patmos), see Michael D. Coogan (eds), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1805-1833.

say that the *Apocalypse* was written during the emperor Domitian's persecution of Christians.[31] In chapter 12, the dragon, identified with the devil, cannot prevail over the pregnant Queen of Heaven and her male child, the messiah, and it is cast down to the earth. "Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus (12:17)." The next chapter is followed up by the descriptions of two beasts. The first beast coming out of the sea is given authority by being described as having seven heads, ten horns, and ten crowns. It carries the physical features of Daniel's beasts, the leopard, the bear, and the lion. After one of its heads is healed from its fatal injury, the whole world marvels and follows it. Given authority by the devil, it rules over the whole world and wages war against God's holy people. The number of the beast is given as 666. Then comes the second beast emerging from the earth, who is told to be the false prophet (16:13, 19:20). It receives its authority from the first beast, as the first beast received it from the dragon (the devil), performing great signs, and making people worship the first beast. Later in chapter 17, a woman is seen, the so-called whore of Babylon, riding the first beast with seven heads and ten horns. The seven heads are explained as the "seven hills" on which the woman sits, while they are also the seven kings (17:9-10). The ten horns, on the other hand, are said to be kings who later will receive their kingdoms along with the first beast temporarily until they are defeated by the Lamb (17:12). In the narrative, the first beast stands out as the single eschatological adversary, perhaps pointing both to the Roman Empire and the Antichrist. At the same time, the healing of its fatally wounded head might have been an

[31] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.30.3 in John Keble (tr), *Five Books of S. Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons: Against Heresies* (London, Oxford, Cambridge: 1872), 520-521; Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, 9 in Thomas P. Halton (tr), *St. Jerome: On Illustrious Men* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 19-21.

allusion to *Nero Redivivus*.[32] To note, according to some scholars, the number 666 of the first beast reads in Hebrew transliteration *nrwn qsr* as "Nero Emperor."[33]

The anti-Roman stance in an apocalyptic framework and its reference to Nero's return is not only found in the Book of Revelation. Nero's alleged tyrannical reign and suicide in 68 CE seem to have caused confusion across the Roman Empire. He was the first imperial persecutor of the Christians, blaming them for the Great Fire of Rome in 64 CE,[34] and according to the Christian tradition, apostles Paul and Peter died martyrs.[35] After his death, Nero was believed to return from the East and reclaim Rome for himself.[36] There appeared three pretenders claiming to be Nero in the years 69, 80, and again in 88 CE. The obscurities of his death and the fear of his return not only found a place in the Book of Revelation as the healed head of the Beast from the sea but also caused later Jewish and Christian prophetic speculations.[37]

To briefly illustrate, in Book 4 of the Sibylline Oracles, written in the late first century CE, the so-called "fugitive from Rome" will cross the Euphrates with his armies and terrorize the east, especially Antioch and Cyprus, and arrive at the West.[38] Book 5, written in Egypt around the first century CE, narrates Nero's career in a prophetical language and foretells his revenge.[39] Lastly, in a section of Book 3, which is believed to be a Christian interpolation, Nero appears as Beliar (a Hebrew name that later came to impersonate the Devil in Christian

[32] Bernard Mcginn, *Antichrist*, 49-54.
[33] Bernard Mcginn, *Antichrist*, 53; Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Harvard Ph.D. Dissertation (1976) 174-175.
[34] Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44 in J. C. Yardley (tr), *Tacitus: The Annals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 359-360; also see, Robert M. Grant, *Augustus to Constantine* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 78-79.
[35] Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, 1, 5 in Thomas P. Halton (tr), *St. Jerome: On Illustrious Men*, 5-7, 12-14.
[36] On Nero Redivivus, see, Marco Frenschkowski, "Nero Redivivus as a Subject of Early Christian Arcane Teaching," in Michael Labahn and Outi Lehtipuu (eds), *People under Power: Early Jewish and Christian Responses to the Roman Empire* (Amsterdam University Press, 2015), especially 232-242.
[37] On Jewish and Christian use of the figure of Nero in Sibylline Oracles, see, McGinn, *Antichrist*, 45-49.
[38] *Sibylline Oracles*, 3:115-130 in J. J. Collins, *Sibylline Oracles (Second Century B.C. – Seventh Century A.D.) A New Translation and Introduction* in James H. Charlesworth (ed), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 386-387.
[39] *Sibylline Oracles*, 5:361-396 in J. J. Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 401-402.

literature) and performs many signs, such as raising the dead, etc.[40] Nero's role in the development of the Antichrist legend can be seen in similar terms to that of Antiochus IV Epiphanes as little horn of Daniel: an eschatological outsider and persecutor of the faithful.

In summary, the prophetical passages found in the Old and New Testament, and by extension, the Sibylline Oracles, do not present a uniform idea of a single eschatological adversary. Nevertheless, the literary construction of their Antichrist-like end time opponent(s) reflects the believers' concerns regarding the conceived "threats" against their own community in response to the very historical circumstances they faced. The little horn of Daniel and the beast(s) of Revelation were envisaged as figures of outsider persecutors of the faithful, whereas false Christs of the Olivet Discourse, man of lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians, and the antichrist(s) of 1 John all conceptualized an internal threat that would divide the body of believers. Based on this biblical ground, in the next part, I will demonstrate how early Christian writers tried to make sense of this cluster of myths and offered their own interpretations.

I.2: Church Exegesis until the Constantinian Turn

Having already demonstrated the varying views about an end time adversary in Christian prophetical literature, the second part of the current chapter is designed to examine how the ancient Christian *litterati* interpreted these biblical passages on the figure of the Antichrist. As a "religion of the book," the Bible offered the scriptural basis for Christian eschatological thought.[41] Nevertheless, the Christian scripture did not present a unified picture of the figure of the Antichrist, even the term itself appearing only in one of the apostolic letters. It was the Christian exegetes and their interpretation of the Christian scripture that turned the

[40] *Sibylline Oracles*, 3:63-74 in J. J. Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 363. Nero in the form of Beliar is also attested in another contemporary Christian text; see, M. A. Knibb, "The Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah: A New Translation and Introduction," in *Old Testament Pseudepigraphia*, vol. 2, 143-176.

[41] The nascent Christianity was a "religion of the book;" see Guy G. Stroumsa, "Early Christianity – A Religion of the Book?" in *Homer, the Bible, and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World*, ed. Margalit Finkelber, Guy G. Stroumsa (Leiden-Boston, 2003), 153-173.

myth into a legend and had its own distinct place in Christian expectations of the eschatological future.[42] On this ground, a political-eschatological reading of the tradition(s) of a newly emerging "Church" will be offered based on the exegetical and theological works of ancient Christian authors, such as Irenaeus of Lyon, Hippolytus of Rome, Tertullian, Victorinus of Pettau, Lactantius, and Cyril of Jerusalem. In this demonstration of the making of tradition(s) that might be labeled as "Antichristology," I intend to show what kind of interpretations about the figure of the Antichrist were available to the bishops in the middle of the fourth century, particularly to Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers, and Lucifer of Cagliari among others.

The so-called first great theologian, Irenaeus (c. 130 – c. 200 CE), is a good starting point. He was probably born in Smyrna and met Polycarb (69 – 155 CE). After studying at Rome, he later became a presbyter of Lyons, and as a legate, he delivered letters to Eleutherius, bishop of Rome. In his absence, the current bishop of Lyons, Pothinus (d. 177 CE), died a martyr, and Irenaeus succeeded him as the bishop of Lyons a year later. Even though Jerome says Irenaeus himself died a martyr, too, this is not certain.[43] In his most well-known work, *Against Heresies*, fragments survived in Greek, Syriac, and Armenian, but the entirety of his work survived in a literal Latin translation. His work essentially is a polemical attack on Gnosticism, particularly against Valentinus and his followers, but *Against Heresies* offer also detailed comments on eschatology and the figure of the Antichrist.

[42] Fr. Maximos Constas summarizes the need for biblical commentary and its role in the process of canonization: "For both communities [Jewish and Byzantine exegetes], the motivation for commentary was usually generated by peculiarities and difficulties (philological, conceptual, etc.) in the sacred text. Solutions for such difficulties were frequently found by connecting an exegetical motif from one passage with parallel motifs from another. Once established, exegetical motifs could be transferred to new contexts and combined with still other motifs, a process that often resulted in the de facto canonization of the motifs in question." See, Fr. Maximos Constas, "Biblical Hermeneutics," in Papaioannou, Stratis (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature* New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 4.

[43] Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, 35 in Thomas P. Halton (tr), *St. Jerome: On Illustrious Men*, 57-59; also see, F. L. Cross, E. A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 846-847.

Using figurative exegesis, Irenaeus seems to be the first compiler of the scattered direct or indirect biblical references to the figure of the Antichrist.[44] According to him, the little horn of Daniel, the beast of Revelation, the man of lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians, and the Antichrist (in the singular) of 1 John all refer to the exact figure: the Antichrist.[45] He thinks of the Antichrist not as the devil but as an individual to come as a king, "taking himself all the might of the devil […] summing up the rebellion of the devil in himself," and will deceive others that he is God and exalt himself as *the* one Idol, "after the manner of tyrants" (*tyrannico more*).[46] After quoting extensively from the Book of Daniel (2:20-25) and the Book of Revelation (17:12-14), he summarizes the career of the Antichrist in a political-eschatological scenario: now reigning fourth kingdom and the beast will be partitioned by ten kings from within then the Antichrist will rise amidst, slaying three kings and subjugating the rest to him, and will reign for three and a half years only to be destroyed by the coming of Jesus Christ.[47] Additionally, referencing Jeremiah 8:16, he inserted that the will come from the tribe of Dan since the tribe is not indicated among those saved in the Book of Revelation.[48] After all, for Irenaeus, the Antichrist is neither the devil nor a heretic but an individual of Jewish origin who will assume power, and while reigning, he will exalt himself as God imitating the tyrants.[49]

[44] For more details about the figurative exegesis and its relation with the "Church Tradition," see, John C. Cavadini, "From Letter to Spirit: The Multiple Senses of Scripture," in Paul M. Blowers and Peter W. Martens (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 126-148.

[45] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.7.2 (of 2 Thessalonians); 3.16.8 (of 1 John); 5.25.2-3 (of Daniel); 5.29.2 (of Revelation) in John Keble (tr), *Five Books of S. Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons: Against Heresies*, 217-218, 269-270, 518-519.

[46] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.25.1 in John Keble (tr), *Five Books of S. Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons: Against Heresies*, 507. It is highly possible that here, Irenaeus was thinking of the Roman emperors' practice of deification (*deificatio* or *ἀποθέωσις*)

[47] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.25.3-5.26.1 in John Keble (tr), *Five Books of S. Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons: Against Heresies*, 508-510.

[48] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.30.2 in John Keble (tr), *Five Books of S. Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons: Against Heresies*, 520.

[49] Irenaeus mentions the apostasy of Gnostics such as Marcion and Valentinians, but in no way does he relate them to the Antichrist. See, Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.26.2 in John Keble (tr), *Five Books of S. Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons: Against Heresies*, 512-513.

Irenaeus shares his opinions on the number of the beast and the Antichrist, i.e., 666 from the Book of Revelation. He starts suggesting some names which have the same numerical value. One of them is ΕΥΑΝΘΑΣ, but he does not dwell on this and moves to the next: ΛΑΤΕΙΝΟΣ. He says, "It is very probable that the last kingdom has the number of 666. For they who now reign are *Latini*."[50] Without saying anything further on the matter, he rushes to another possibility: TEITAN. He considers this as a more plausible option, "for it is old and withdrawn from use; for neither of our own kings has anyone been called Titan, nor any one of the idols which are publicly adored among Greeks or barbarians has this name […] And for the rest, it is also ancient and trustworthy and a royal or rather even a tyrannical name."[51] Later in the same paragraph, Irenaeus does not offer an affirmative answer. In the end, Irenaeus does not seem aware of the Hebrew word *nrwn qsr* as "Nero Emperor." It is even more interesting to see how Irenaeus shies away from identifying the Roman Empire with the fourth Danielic kingdom and how he thinks the name Titan is a plausible conjecture since it does not offend the current hegemonic Greco-Roman culture. However, his rejection of *lateinus* does indicate, however indirectly, that there were others who thought so.

Hippolytus (c. 170 – c. 236 CE) is another ecclesiastical writer who, at least according to the *Bibliotheca* of Photius I of Constantinople (810/820 – 893 CE), was probably a disciple of Irenaeus of Lyon and a presbyter in Rome.[52] He wrote a number of biblical commentaries,[53] and, according to Jerome, Origen (c. 185 – c. 253) listened to one of his sermons in Rome while being urged by Ambrose of Alexandria (212 – c. 250) to write commentaries just as Hippolytus

[50] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.30.3 in John Keble (tr), *Five Books of S. Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons: Against Heresies*, 520-521.
[51] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.30.3 John Keble (tr), F*ive Books of S. Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons: Against Heresies*, 520-521.
[52] Photius, *Bibliotheca*, 121.94a in R. Henry, Photius. Bibliothèque, 2nd vol. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960); also see F. L. Cross, E. A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, 3rd ed., 773-774.
[53] Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel* was the first known Christian biblical commentary written in Greek, while Victorinus' *Commentary on Revelation* is the earliest extant Latin commentary. For more details about this literary discourse, see; Josef Lössl, "Commentaries," Paul M. Blowers and Peter W. Martens (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 171-186.

did.[54] He died a martyr after his exile to Sardinia during the persecution at the time of Emperor Maximinus Thrax.

Among his other writings, Hippolytus' *Commentary on Daniel* and *On Christ and Antichrist* are most relevant to the present discussion. To begin with the former, in response to the two contemporary apocalyptic movements of bishops and their congregations in Syria and Pontus,[55] he calculated the birth of Jesus as the 5500 *anno mundi*, thus delaying the *eschaton*'s timing by about three hundred years,[56] while reminded that the sixth thousandth year must be fulfilled first.[57] Additionally, as he was speaking of the iron parts of the statue of Daniel 2 and the fourth beast of Daniel 7, Hippolytus employs typological exegesis and, unlike Irenaeus, did not refrain himself from identifying the Roman Empire as the fourth Danielic kingdom: "After these things he [Daniel] says, "*iron legs*," so that he may signal the fearful and terrible beast, which has iron teeth, which are the Romans who rule now, who are strong as iron."[58] He even goes further on, comparing the synchronous births of the Empire under Augustus and Jesus in the following:

> For when in the forty-second year of Caesar Augustus the Lord was born, when the kingdom of the Romans flourished, the Lord, through the apostles, summoned all nations and all tongues and made a nation of Christians who believe in the Lord and who carry a new name in [their] heart, in the same manner [this] kingdom which exists now, *which rules according to the operation of Satan,* [italics are mine] counterfeits [the kingdom of Christ]; it likewise

[54] Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, 61 in Thomas P. Halton (tr), *St. Jerome: On Illustrious Men*, 87-90.
[55] Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel*, 4.18-19 in T. C. Schmidt, *Hippolytus of Rome: Commentary on Daniel and 'Chronicon,'* Gorgias Studies in Early Christianity and Patristics 67 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2017), 147-149. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260/265 – 339 CE) also mentions a certain Judas who calculated the seventy weeks of Daniel 9 and discoursed about the coming of the Antichrist in the tenth year of Septimius of Severus' reign (appr. 203 CE). Eusebius complains about how the times of persecution cloud the judgment of Christians. See, Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History*, 6.7 in C. F. Crusé (tr) *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition* (Peabody, Massachusetts: 2004), 198.
[56] For larger implications of this, see, David G. Dunbar, "The Delay of the Parousia in Hippolytus," in *Vigilae Christianae*, vol. 37 no. 4 (Brill, 1983), 313-27.
[57] Hippolytus of Rome, *Commentary on Daniel*, 4.23.3-6 in T. C. Schmidt, *Hippolytus of Rome: Commentary on Daniel and 'Chronicon,'* 152-153.
[58] Hippolytus of Rome, *Commentary on Daniel*, 4.7.4, in T. C. Schmidt, *Hippolytus of Rome: Commentary on Daniel and 'Chronicon,'* 137.

> collects those who are the most wellborn from all nations and prepares them for war, having called them Romans.[59]

In addition to his identification of the fourth Danielic kingdom with the Roman Empire, Hippolytus openly styles the empire as an apparatus of the devil in stark contrast against the kingdom of Christ. Applying the anti-imperial apocalyptic discourse of the Book of Daniel to the Roman Empire, he openly manifests his hostility against the Roman Empire.[60] His anti-Roman stance is also enhanced by his emphasis on the possible names of the beast's number, 666. He lists the same names Irenaeus did: Εὐάνθας, Τειτάν, "an ancient and notable name," and Λατεῖνος. Contrary to Irenaeus, Hippolytus highlights the probability of the last option, "and it is manifest to all that those who at present still hold the power are Latins. If, then, we take the name as the name of a single man, it becomes *Latinus*."[61] Although he refrains from suggesting a definitive answer to the name of the beast's number, he inclines more toward the "Latin" than "Titan."

His other work, titled *On Christ and Antichrist*, is the first theological treatise devoted to the figure of the Antichrist. From the outset, in a similar way to his comparison of the births of Jesus and the Roman Empire, he presents the antithetical characters of Christ and the Antichrist in the following:

> Christ is a lion, so Antichrist is also a lion; Christ is a king, so Antichrist is also a king. The Saviour was manifested as a lamb, so he too, in like manner, will appear as a lamb, though within he is a wolf. The Saviour came into the World in the circumcision, and he will come in the same manner. The Lord sent apostles among all the nations, and he, in like manner, will send false apostles. The

[59] Hippolytus of Rome, *Commentary on Daniel*, 4.9.2 in T. C. Schmidt, *Hippolytus of Rome: Commentary on Daniel and 'Chronicon,'* 139. It should be noted that the same analogy of synchronous births is also interpreted in a positive way. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, Melito of Sardis (d. 180 CE) sent a letter to the emperor Antoninus Pius (r. 138-161 CE) in which he stated the power and glory of the empire would continue to grow if he protected Christianity. See, Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.26.7. Similar positive statements are also made by Eusebius himself. For example, see, Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 1.4.1-5.
[60] Hippolytus also offers an explanation for the mystical language found in the Scriptures. Then, he goes on to boast his courage for speaking plainly: "[…] how much greater risk shall we run in venturing to declare openly things spoken by them in obscure terms!" in *On Christ and Antichrist*, 29 in J. H. MacMahon (tr), *Hippolytus of Rome: On Christ and Antichrist*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5 (Buffalo, N. Y.:1886).
[61] Hippolytus, *On Christ and Antichrist*, 50 in J. H. MacMahon (tr), *Hippolytus of Rome: On Christ and Antichrist*.

> Saviour gathered together the sheep that were scattered abroad, and he, in like manner, will bring together a people that is scattered abroad. The Lord gave a seal to those who believed in Him, and he will give one like manner. The Saviour appeared in the form of man, and he too will come in the form of a man. The Saviour raised up and showed His holy flesh like a temple, and he will raise a temple of stone in Jerusalem. And his seductive arts we shall exhibit in what follows.[62]

Hippolytus seems to be following the footsteps of Irenaeus in stating that the Antichrist will be a single eschatological adversary in a human form of Jewish origin and his activities in Jerusalem.[63] Like Irenaeus, he does not have anything to say about Antichrist-Nero. But this does not necessarily mean that the Roman Empire or its ruler would not have a role at the end of the days.

He again identifies the Roman empire with the fourth Danielic kingdom, whose partitioning into ten kingdoms will be followed by the rise of the little horn, whom he sees as none other than the Antichrist. Then, he continues, the Antichrist will establish the kingdom of the Jews (Ἰουδαίων βασιλείαν ἀναστήσει) and defeat three other kings (that of Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia, whom Hippolytus associates with the three horns), only to rule as a tyrant.[64] Furthermore, after referencing the Book of Revelation (13:11-18), Hippolytus identifies the first beast from the sea with the Roman empire, the second beast from the earth with the kingdom of the Antichrist, and the two horns on the second beast with the false prophet. His explanation of the second beast taking control of the first, whose fatally wounded head is being healed, needs to be quoted at length:

> And the words, "he exercised all the power of the first beast before him, and caused the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed (Rev. 13:12)" signify that, *after the manner of the law of Augustus* [italics are mine], by whom the empire of Rome was established, he

[62] Hippolytus, *On Christ and Antichrist*, 6 in J. H. MacMahon (tr), *Hippolytus of Rome: On Christ and Antichrist*.
[63] In *Commentary on Daniel*, 4.53.1., Hippolytus speaks of two abominations found in Daniel, one of destruction and one of desolation. He regards the former as having been realized by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, while the latter is associated with the Antichrist. Irenaeus, too, speaks of the Antichrist's expected abomination in the Temple of Jerusalem; see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.25.2.
[64] Hippolytus, *On Christ and Antichrist*, 25-28 in J. H. MacMahon (tr), *Hippolytus of Rome: On Christ and Antichrist*.

> too will rule and govern, sanctioning everything by it, and taking greater glory to himself. For this is the fourth beast, whose head was wounded and healed again, in its being broken up or even dishonoured, and partitioned into four crowns; and he then (Antichrist) shall with knavish skill heal it, as it were, and restore it.[65]

Hippolytus here is consistent in his reasoning. For him, the Antichrist must be a Jew from the tribe of Dan and will raise his own Jewish kingdom after the dissolution of the Roman empire, only to restore the empire and rule it in the manner of the Romans (κατὰ τὸν Αὐγούστου νόμον). In his eschatological imagination, the Antichrist's tyrannical rule could have been likened to none other than the Roman rule he witnessed.

However, it should also be noted that not every Christian living under the so-called *Pax Romana* shared Hippolytus' hostility against the Roman Empire and its emperor. A contemporary figure to Hippolytus, Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 225 CE), the first writer of an extensive corpus of Latin Christian literature, is a notable example of this. Born in Carthage and raised as a pagan, he received a good education in literature and rhetoric,[66] later practiced law, and converted to Christianity before 197 CE.[67] According to Jerome, he was a presbyter and was called "master" by Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage (c. 200 –258 CE).[68] As an apologist and a polemicist, he held a rather conciliatory view of the Roman Empire. In his *Apology*, he appears to be a well-wisher for the empire and its emperors, as he says:

> But there is another and more prevailing reason which determines us to intercede with heaven for the emperors, and for the whole estate of the empire, and their prosperity. And it is this, that we are of opinion that the conflagration of the universe which is now at hand, and is likely to flame out in the conclusion of this century, and to be such a horrid scene of misery, *is retarded by this interposition of the Roman prosperity* [italics are mine]; and therefore we desire not to be spectators of dissolving nature; and while we pray for it to be deferred, we pray for the subsistence of the Roman Empire. […] But what need I say more

[65] Hippolytus, *On Christ and Antichrist*, 49 in J. H. MacMahon (tr), *Hippolytus of Rome: On Christ and Antichrist*.
[66] For more detail on the role of Graeco-Roman *paideia*, particularly on that of its grammatical and rhetorical education, in Christian intellectuals' upbringing, see Peter W. Martens, "Ideal Interpreters," in Paul M. Blowers and Peter W. Martens (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 149-165.
[67] F. L. Cross, E. A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, 3rd ed., 1591-1592.
[68] Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, 53 in Thomas P. Halton (tr), *St. Jerome: On Illustrious Men*, 74-77.

> to show the sacred tie which binds on the duty of allegiance upon Christian subjects? It is enough to say that we look upon ourselves under a necessity to honour the emperor as a person of God's election; so that I may very deservedly say that we have much the greatest share in Caesar, as being made emperor by our God.[69]

Here, Tertullian alludes to the idea that the Roman empire is the *katechon* of 2 Thessalonians that holds back the coming of the Antichrist and the *eschaton*. In this passage, he neither quotes the epistle of Paul nor names the Antichrist and the end time events, but the absence of their mention can be explained through his purposes and audience. The *Apology* was composed in 197 CE and addressed an elite pagan audience to promote an accommodative view toward the Christians living under Roman rule.

Yet, a similar political-eschatological scenario can be found in Tertullian. In *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, this time addressing a Christian audience, Tertullian asserts:

> "[…] Let no man deceive you by any means. For that day shall not come, unless indeed there first come a falling away," he means indeed of this present empire, "and that man of sin be revealed," that is to say, Antichrist, "the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or religion; so that he sits in the temple of God, affirming that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was with you, I used to tell you these things? And now you know what detains, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity does already work; only he who now hinders must hinder, until he be taken out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2:1-7)." What obstacle is there but the Roman state, the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms, shall introduce Antichrist upon (its own ruins)?[70]

Tertullian clearly demonstrates his belief in an individual eschatological adversary, and the same political-eschatological scenario is also found in Irenaeus and Hippolytus. But their emphasis seems to be different. Relying on 2 Thessalonians, Tertullian deliberately chooses to highlight the Roman Empire's positive role as the *katechon* in the eschatological future. In contrast, Hippolytus makes use of the anti-imperial Danielic discourse found in the books of

[69] Tertullian, *Apology*, 32-33 in WM. Reeve (tr), *The Apology of Tertullian* (London & Sydney: Newberry House, 1889), 95-96.
[70] Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 24 in Peter Holmes (tr), *Tertullian: On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885).

Daniel and Revelation in his identification of the empire as the fourth persecutor earthly kingdom and draws a strong parallelism between the images of the Antichrist and the Roman emperor.

Tertullian's usage of the Antichrist motif relies not on the books of Daniel or Revelation but somewhere else. In *On Fasting*, he explicitly indicates, "But you affirm it is a human Antichrist: for by this name heretics are called in John."[71] Also, in his polemical work titled *Against Marcion*, again referencing 1 John, he calls Marcion and his followers "antichrists."[72] His polemical targets to be labeled as the antichrist(s) are not just limited to the Marcionite sect but to all so-called heretics. A relevant passage in his *Prescription Against Heresies* should be quoted extensively:

> But let us rather be mindful of the sayings of the Lord, and of the letters of the apostles; for they have both told us beforehand that there shall be heresies and have given us, in anticipation, warnings to avoid them; and inasmuch as we are not alarmed because they exist, so we ought not to wonder that they are capable of doing that, on account of which they must be shunned. The Lord teaches us that many "*ravening wolves shall come in sheep's clothing* (Matthew 7:15)." Now, what are these sheep's clothing, but the external surface of the Christian profession? Who are the ravening wolves but those deceitful senses and spirits which are lurking within to waste the flock of Christ? Who are the false prophets but deceptive predictors of the future? Who are the false apostles but the preachers of a spurious gospel? Who also are the Antichrists, both now and evermore, but the men who rebel against Christ? Heresies, at the present time, will no less rend the church by their perversion of doctrine, than will Antichrist persecute her at that day by the cruelty of his attacks, except that persecution make seven martyrs, (but) heresy only apostates.[73]

Tertullian puts his words in such a way that he praises martyrdom through persecution and vilifies the heretics because of their perversion of the true doctrine, causing harm to the Church no less than the Antichrist himself will. After all, for Tertullian, the Antichrist is seen as an

[71] Tertullian, *On Fasting*, 11 in S. Thelwall (tr), *Tertullian: On Fasting*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 4 (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885).
[72] Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 3.8 in Peter Holmes (tr), *Tertullian: Against Marcion*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885).
[73] Tertullian, *Prescription Against Heresies*, 4 in Peter Holmes (tr), *Tertullian: Prescription Against Heresies*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885).

internal threat to the Church. Unlike Irenaeus and Hippolytus, whose conception of the Antichrist is more of a foreign tyrant, posing an external threat to the community of believers, Tertullian regards the same figure as an internal threat against the Church posed by schismatic heretics.

Next Christian writer is Victorinus of Pettau (d. c. 304). According to Jerome, he was martyred, probably during the persecution under the reign of Diocletian, and he wrote many commentaries on the books of the Old Testament, among which some parts of the Book of Revelation survive.[74] The remaining fragments concerning the seventeenth chapter of the Book of Revelation demonstrate his view of the end times. First, he identifies the seven hills on which the whore of Babylon sits as the city of Rome. Then, he goes on to name the seven kings mentioned in the seventeenth chapter from the time of Nero to Domitian when the Book of Revelation was composed: Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian; in his words, "*And the beast which you saw is of the seven* (17:11), since before those kings Nero reigned."[75] Victorinus adheres to the common political eschatological scenario: the empire's partitioning by ten kings, the murder of the three kings, and the subjugation of the remaining seven to the Antichrist. Then, speaking of the healing of the beast's wounded head, he introduces Antichrist-Nero into his narrative, "Now that one of the heads was, as it were, slain to death, and that the stroke of his death was directed, he speaks of Nero. For it is plain that when the cavalry sent by the senate was pursuing him, he himself cut his throat."[76] For Victorinus, after his return from death, Nero will be received as Christ by the Jews, and he, as a pretender-Christ, will enforce Jewish rites and circumcision. Victorinus seems to have relied not only on the books of Revelation and Daniel but also on the Sibylline Oracles or prophecies

[74] Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, 74 in Thomas P. Halton (tr), *St. Jerome: On Illustrious Men*, 105-106; also see, F. L. Cross, E. A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, 3rd ed., 1694.
[75] Victorinus, *Commentary on Revelation*, 17.11 in Robert Ernest Wallis, Victorinus of Pettau: Commentary on Revelation, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7 ((Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1886).
[76] Victorinus, *Commentary on Revelation*, 17.11.

of Nero's return,[77] cladding the first persecutor of Christians in the person of the Antichrist as an eschatological adversary.

Lactantius (c. 240 – c. 320 CE) was a Christian apologist who worked as a teacher of rhetoric at Nicomedia under the emperor Diocletian (c. 245 – 311/312 CE), but after his conversion to Christianity (c. 300), he was deposed from his post. Later in his life, he tutored Constantine I's (c. 272 – 337) eldest son, Crispus (c. 300 – 326 CE), who was executed by his father.[78] Among his other writings, the *Divine Institutes* offers his account of the end times. In chapter 15 of the seventh book, Lactantius speaks about the end of earthly empires in a cyclical pattern and prophesizes Rome's awaiting doom, "The Sibyls say openly that Rome will perish, and by judgment of God, because she held God's name in hatred and in her hostility to justice slew the people brought up to truth. Hystaspes also, […] said that the power and name of Rome would be removed from the world."[79] Interestingly, Lactantius openly quotes from the prophecies of the Sibyl and Persian sage Hystaspes but never mentions his references to the Christian scripture.

In the next chapter, he narrates an end time scenario with certain changes compared to the ones presented so far. He still mentions the division of the kingdom among ten rival kings, but this time, another king rises from the far north, slaying three others and becoming the prince of all. Lactantius ascribes roles similar to those of the Antichrist, such as changing the laws, mingling divine and human things, and plunder, etc. Yet, he does not name this king of the north as the Antichrist. Later in the seventeenth chapter, another king rises from Syria, "born

[77] Commodian (mid-3rd c. CE), the first known Christian Latin poet, also speaks of Nero as the Antichrist. See, Commodian, *Instructions*, 1.41. But in his *Song of Two Peoples*, the Antichrist Nero is slain by another antichrist-like king from the East. See, Commodian, *Song of Two Peoples*, 791-1060.
[78] Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, 80 in Thomas P. Halton (tr), *St. Jerome: On Illustrious Men*, 111-113; also see, F. L. Cross, E. A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*, 3rd ed., 942.
[79] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 7.15.18-19 in Anthony Bowen, Peter Garnsey (tr), *Lactantius: Divine Institutes* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 423. Hystaspes was a Persian satrap and father of Darius I, who, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, was the chief of the magi. See, Ammianus Marcellinus, *Roman History*, 23.6.

from an evil spirit" and "a prophet of lies." He will call himself God and demand to be worshipped as the Son of God, performing signs and wonders. Later, he will attempt to destroy God's temple and persecute the righteous people.[80] It is this second figure Lactantius explicitly calls the Antichrist.[81] Here, Tertullian distributes some common features of the Antichrist to two the Antichrist-like figures and calls only the latter as such.[82] The figure of the Syrian king, whom he calls the Antichrist, might be seen as a reference to his assumed Jewish origin.[83] Either way, his Antichrist still shares some of the common attributes, such as calling himself God and being an external persecutor of the faithful.

Last but not least, Cyril (c. 315 – 386 CE) was the bishop of Jerusalem from about the year 348. Due to the ongoing trinitarian disputes in the fourth century, he was banished from his see several times.[84] He is most known for his work *Catechetical Lectures* (c. 350 CE), twenty-three lectures given to the catechumens in preparation for baptism.[85] This work is valuable for what he had to say about the end of days and for its demonstration of now-established biblical teaching and church exegesis in the middle of the fourth century. For example, he says:

> Now these things we teach, not of our own ingenuity, but *having learned them out of the divine Scriptures of the Church* [italics are mine], and chiefly from the

[80] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 7.16 in Anthony Bowen, Peter Garnsey (tr), *Lactantius: Divine Institutes*, 424-425.
[81] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 7.19.6 in Anthony Bowen, Peter Garnsey (tr), *Lactantius: Divine Institutes*, 428.
[82] This is what McGinn labels as "double Antichrist tradition." According to him, this tradition only occurs in Latin Christianity, which can also be found in the Sulpicius Severus' biography of Martin of Tours (c. 316 – 397 CE). See, Mcginn, *Antichrist*, 65-68.
[83] The figure of the Syrian king might be the same "king from the East" found in Commodian's *Song of Two Peoples*. Also, Hippolytus mentions "the king of Assyria" found in Isaiah 8:7-8 and interprets it as a metaphor to the Antichrist. Other than these two occurrences, I could not find any reference.
[84] After the death of Maximus and evicting his designated successor Heraclius, Cyril was ordained by Acacius of Caesarea as the bishop of Jerusalem in 348. Cyril had a dispute with his patron Acacius and, thus, was deposed in a local synod in 357. Then, he changed his allegiance to Basil of Ancyra, and the Council of Seleucia in 359 dropped all charges against him, reinstalling him to his see. Yet, the Council of Constantinople in 360 affirmed his deposition. With the Council of Constantinople in 381, he professed his adherence to the Nicene Creed and remained as the bishop of Jerusalem until his death in 386.
[85] For more details on catecheses and homilies in general and their performativity in particular, see; Wendy Mayer, "Catecheses and Homilies," in Paul M. Blowers and Peter W. Martens (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 243-254. Also, Alexis Doval dates the composition of Cyril's lectures to 351. For the discussion of its date, see, Alexis Doval, "The Date of Cyril of Jerusalem's Catecheses," *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Vol. 48, Pt. 1, April 1997), 129-132.

> prophecy of Daniel in the text; as Gabriel also the Archangel interpreted it, speaking thus; "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall surpass all kingdoms (Daniel 7:23)." *And that this kingdom is that of the Romans, has been the tradition of the Church's interpreters* [italics are mine].[86]

Cyril is clear about the authoritative sources from which he derives his teaching: the scriptures and the church tradition. Thus, his lecturing can be taken as a testimony of growing and more or less established church exegesis.

The fifteenth lecture of the catechesis, in its entirety, is devoted to the teaching of eschatology and starts by instructing about the signs of the end. For him, previous heretics like Simon Magus and Menander, current wars between the Romans and the Persians over Mesopotamia, ongoing internal conflict within the Church, and preaching of the Gospel over the world partly fulfilled the prophecies in Matthew 24:4-15.[87] More interestingly, he interprets the "falling away (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10)" as falling away from the orthodox right faith, unlike Tertullian, who took it as the dissolution of the Roman empire shown above. Cyril explains the breaking away from the orthodoxy as "For men have fallen away from the right faith, and some preach the identity of the Son with the Father, and others dare to say that Christ was brought into being, from a substance which had a beginning. And formerly the heretics were manifest; but now the Church is filled with heretics in disguise."[88] The disguised heretics Cyril refers to here are undoubtedly those who preached Christ was created and had a beginning (allegedly called "Arians").[89] For Cyril, "hatred of the brethren makes room next for Antichrist," and "already he [Antichrist] has begun to send forth his forerunners."[90] Reflecting his contemporary

[86] Cyril, *Catechetical Lectures*, 15.13 in J. H. Parker (tr), *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem* (London: Oxford, 1838), 190-191.
[87] Cyril, *Catechetical Lectures*, 15.5-8 in J. H. Parker (tr), *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril*, 186-188.
[88] Cyril, *Catechetical Lectures*, 15.9 in J. H. Parker (tr), *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril*, 188-189.
[89] For more details on Cyril's ecclesiastical career, see, Peter van Nuffelen, "The Career of Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 348 – 87): A Reassessment, *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Vol. 58, Pt 1, April 2007, 134-146.
[90] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 15.9.

political and ecclesiastical concerns, Cyril makes the issue of unity of the Church an integral part of the eschatological future – even with a fair dose of apocalyptic anxiety.

For Cyril, falling away from the orthodox belief, thus endangering the unity of the community of the faithful, prepares the way for the Antichrist. He notes, however, that Antichrist's coming will not occur until the Roman Empire's partitioning by ten kings, after which Antichrist will rise as the eleventh and take control of the Roman Empire. He will humble the three kings and subjugate the rest to himself. According to Cyril, the Antichrist first will act mildly, only to show his true face later and persecute the faithful.[91] By falsely styling himself after Christ, he will deceive the Jews and seduce the Gentiles with magical illusions.[92] Additionally, Cyril believes that the Antichrist will take control of the Roman Empire, but using trickery, not by rightful inheritance, as he explicitly asserts, "A blasphemer is he and an outrageous person, not inheriting his kingdom from his fathers, but usurping power by means of sorcery."[93] Cyril neither seems to believe that the Antichrist will be born in the purple, nor does he suggest a Jewish origin, but he does believe that, as an instrument of Satan, the Antichrist will seize the Roman Empire and rule it.

Conclusion:

As discussed so far, the prophetical literature (Old and New Testaments and Sibylline Oracles) does not suggest a coherent and unified picture of the Antichrist myth. The literary constructions of the little horn of Daniel and the beast(s) of Revelation point to an end time persecutor, and their source of inspiration was found in the persons of Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Roman Emperor Nero. Interestingly, the legend of Nero's return led to later

[91] Later in his lecture, Cyril compares the earlier persecutions with that of the Antichrist on the grounds that the former only put the Christians to death while inflicting both fear and deceit. See, Cyril, *Catechetical Lectures*, in J. H. Parker (tr), *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril*, 15.17, 193-194.
[92] Cyril, *Catechetical Lectures*, 15.11-12 in J. H. Parker (tr), *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril*, 189-190.
[93] Cyril, *Catechetical Lectures*, 15.13 in J. H. Parker (tr), *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril*, 190-191.

Jewish and Christian apocalyptic speculations in the Sibylline Oracles. In the meantime, false Christs of the Olivet Discourse, the man of lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians and the antichrist(s) of 1 John refer to present and future schismatic heretics as end time adversaries of God who would divide the unity of the believers during the last days.

On the other hand, the Ancient Christian commentators regard these varied biblical references as one of the many other names of the same figure and even draw a common "plotline" of the end of days. Still, their interpretations differ according to their personal attitudes and polemical targets. For some, the identity of the Antichrist was to be a pretender and a deceiver, often associated with a heretic, whereas some others view the same figure as Nero Redivivus, or a person of Jewish origin who would seize the rule of the empire. Such varying interpretations were still present at least in the early fifth century,[94] and for the first time only in the Eastern Roman Empire in the seventh century, the Antichrist was directly associated with the office of the Roman emperor.[95] Despite the different perspectives on the question of identity, I demonstrate that the interpretations of the coming of the Antichrist, relying on the same Scriptural basis, essentially followed two mainstream lines of thought: either an internal or external eschatological adversary posing an existential threat to the Christian community. Still, neither in the Christian prophetical literature nor in the Church exegesis of the first four centuries during the common era, there was an explicit and direct association of the Antichrist with the office of the Roman emperor that could serve Athanasius

[94] Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 CE) summarizes the different viewpoints about whether Nero would return as the Antichrist or the *katechon* refers to the Roman empire or to the heretics. In the end, Augustine does not suggest a definitive answer of his own; see Augustine, *City of God*, XX.19.

[95] To my knowledge, Andreas of Caesarea (563 – 614 CE) was the very first commentator who explicitly associated the coming of the Antichrist as a Roman emperor. See, Andreas of Caesarea, *Commentary on Revelation*, 54.187 in Eugenia Scarvelis Constantinou, *Guiding to a Blessed End: Andrew of Caesarea and His Apocalypse Commentary in the Ancient Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 250:"For he [the Antichrist] *will not come from another nation*, […] *but he will come as the king of the Romans* [italics are mine] for the purpose of the dissolution and perdition of those who were persuaded by him." Also, Andreas' commentary was so influential that it became the standard interpretation in the subsequent centuries of the Eastern Roman Empire. See, Stephen Shoemaker, "The Afterlife of the Apocalypse of John in Byzantium," in Derek Krueger and Robert S. Nelson (eds), *The New Testament in Byzantium* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2016), 301-316.

of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers, and Lucifer of Cagliari in their employment of the Antichrist typology against the Roman emperor Constantius II.

Yet, the rule of the Antichrist is closely associated with the "imagined" career of Roman emperors. For instance, the Antichrist's exaltation of himself as an "idol" is likened to the deification practice of the Roman emperors (*deificatio* or *ἀποθέωσις*) by Irenaeus of Lyon, as he says, "after the manner of tyrants" (*tyrannico more*). Also, despite Hippolytus' attribution of Jewish identity to the Antichrist from the tribe of Dan, Hippolytus' Antichrist would raise his own Jewish Kingdom after the dissolution of the Roman Empire only to restore and rule it eventually "in the manner of the law of Augustus" (*κατὰ τὸν Αὐγούστου νόμον*). In the eschatological imagination of at least some Christian scholars, if not all, the Antichrist's tyrannical rule could have been likened to none other than the rule of Roman emperors. Also, only in Cyril's account in the mid-fourth century did the two interpretive traditions (perception of the Antichrist as an external or internal threat) find a place together in the political eschatological scenario, in which the so-called heretics were preparing the way for the tyrant persecutor Antichrist. In short, the Bible and its interpretive tradition outlined the Christian "History of Salvation," forming the canonized past and the eschatological horizon. Relying on this biblical corpus and exegetical tradition that they found at their disposal, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer offered a "creative" interpretation of the Antichrist figure in response to contemporary ecclesiastical politics. Now that their polemical target was both a Roman emperor and a Christian whom they viewed as a "heretic," Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer cloth the figure of the Antichrist with the purple in the person of Constantius.

Chapter 2: The Antichrist Typology in the Invectives

Introduction

The so-called "Constantinian turn" offered new creative possibilities on how to perceive the figure of the Antichrist as well as to criticize a Roman emperor. The so-called "defenders of the Nicene Orthodoxy," Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer, associated the Antichrist, among some other biblical villainous figures, with Constantius in their literary criticisms against the person of the emperor and his ecclesiastical policies. The current chapter argues that such a charge against Constantius II is more than a mere slander, and its employment should be seen as an indicator of the deliberate positioning and impression of a particular Roman emperor in the Nicene Christians' teleologically oriented understanding of Christian "Salvation History." In this premise, I show how the authors mentioned above try to justify their use of the Antichrist typology on biblical grounds and explore in what ways its usage relates to their criticisms against the emperor. The chapter concludes with a brief remark on the reception and circulation of these texts, along with their intended purpose and audience.

To begin with, it should be indicated outright that there are some biblical figures mentioned in the invectives other than the Antichrist. These mainly include, but are not limited to, Ahab, Saul, Belshazzar, the pharaoh, Judas, Pilate, etc.[96] For example, Athanasius of Alexandria, using a variety of villainous characters from both the Old and New Testaments, calls Constantius "a new Ahab and another Belshazzar of our times."[97] He even goes on to

[96] Ahab; Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 45.5, 53.3, 68.1. Saul; Ibid., 33.4, 37.1, 67.33-4. Belshazzar, Ibid., 45.5. Pharaoh; ibid., 30.4, 34.2, 58.1, 68.1. Judas; ibid., 57.4, 64.3, Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 10, Lucifer of Cagliari, *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, 2, 11, 14. Pilate; Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 32.4, 41.2, 68.2-3. For the English translations of these texts used in the thesis, I use the following, Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II: Athanasius of Alexandria, History of the Arians, Hilary of Poitiers, Against Constantius and Lucifer of Cagliari, The Necessity of dying for the Son of God*, Translated Texts for Historians 67 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016).

[97] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 45.5 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 79.

compare the emperor with Ahab regarding his maltreatment of bishops and the emperor's unforgiving attitude with Pilate's.[98] However, the association of a variety of different figures with the person of Constantius need not be considered an inconsistency on the part of these authors. As Christine Smith puts it in her study about Eusebius' panegyric for the consecration of the Church in Tyre, "[…] single material object may signify diverse spiritual realities."[99] In the case of Constantius and the biblical typologies applied to him, Constantius' career as a "heretical emperor" provided more than one model for the Nicene authors in their criticism. Putting the multiplicity of the biblical typologies found in the invectives aside, my aim with this chapter is to explore specifically the ways in which the Antichrist typology is used.

Following Claudia Rapp's study on the "Roman mode of the *exemplum* (or its counterparts in Greek, *ὑπόδειγμα* or *παράδειγμα*)" and the "Christian mode of *typology*,"[100] I prefer to use throughout the latter term for the literary use of the Antichrist figure. According to Rapp, an *exemplum* is drawn from the historical past and re-enacted through active "imitation." In contrast, as a specifically Christian hermeneutical strategy, typology puts forward the biblical imagery as a "prefiguration" of the present.[101] In their literary invectives, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer all jointly used (both negative and positive) *exempla* along with biblical typologies.[102] By serving the historical and biblical figures as a point of comparison, both *exemplum* and typology, as rhetorical devices, assert a moral judgment for the present.

[98] For Ahab and Belshazzar, see Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 68.1; and for Pilate, 68.2-3.
[99] Christine Smith, "'Christian Rhetoric in Eusebius' Panegyric at Tyre," *Vigiliae Christianae*, No. 43, No.3 (Sep., 1989), 236.
[100] Claudia Rapp, "Old Testament Models for Emperors in Early Byzantium," in *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, ed. R. Nelson, P. Magdalino (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2010), 175–197.
[101] Claudia Rapp, "Old Testament Models for Emperors in Early Byzantium," 178-179, 190.
[102] For instance, Constantius' father, Constantine I, is used as a positive example for imitation by Athanasius and Hilary, whereas Lucifer used it as a negative one. The difference between their presentation of Constantine as a point of reference is discussed in Chapter 3, but for now, it suffices to note that, disagreeing with Rapp's interpretation, an *exemplum* need not serve as an exclusively positive comparison.

My intention with the use of typology over *exemplum* is not to suggest an exclusive distinction between "classical" and "Christian" polemical literature,[103] but just to emphasize the distinct Christian expression of its use. In the same traditional Graeco-Roman literary discourse of invective, typology appears as a recognizable Christian mode of expression. Furthermore, I think the use of the Antichrist typology stands out among others. The typologies of other biblical villains, like Ahab, the pharaoh, Judas, and Pilate, belong to the past. The Antichrist, on the other hand, is a biblical figure to *come*. Its direct or indirect association with the contemporary emperor alludes to a partial or complete fulfillment of the biblical prophecy. In other words, it brings the eschatological future to near the historical present.

II.1: Vilifying a Living Christian Roman Emperor: Constantius the Antichrist

The references to the Antichrist in the literary invectives have two polemical targets: the so-called "Arians" and the Roman emperor Constantius II. Firstly, in *Against Constantius*, Hilary refrains from calling the house of prayer a "church" as churches became under the control of the rival factions. Instead, he calls the churches "a synagogue of the Antichrist."[104] By doing so, Hilary denies the Christian identity of his rivals and pictures them as unfaithful Jews following the Antichrist, not Christ. Also, in his *History of the Arians*, Athanasius speaks of an instance in Alexandria when the "Arians," led by the military officer *dux*, mistreated the needy and poor in the streets, and reports the bystander's reaction: "[…] people outside who witnessed this, and even the Hellenes who saw it, all denounced the Arians as antichrists and executioners."[105] What Athanasius implies here, perhaps in an ironic way, is that the abuse of

[103] Richard Flower criticizes Rapp's distinction as it suggests an exclusive "classical" and "Christian" polemical literature. See Richard Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 24-25.
[104] Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 117.
[105] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 62.2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 93.

the Alexandrians was so obvious to everyone that *even* the Hellenes protested it by calling the "Arians" antichrists. Furthermore, in *Concerning Athanasius*, Lucifer names the "Arians" "the antichrists of our time" since, according to him, they deny the one Son of God.[106] Apart from the single eschatological adversary Antichrist, both Athanasius and Lucifer also attribute to the "antichrists" of 1 John 2 a group identity, as discussed in the previous chapter. On the one hand, calling their rivals "Arians" allows the Nicene Christians, like Athanasius and Lucifer, to deny the name Christian to the non-Nicenes; naming the "Arians" antichrists, on the other hand, adds another layer of meaning to their denunciation of the non-Nicenes as the enemies of God and his people. After all, the representation of the "Arians" as antichrists only helps further to portray the imperial patron of the non-Nicene party, Constantius, as *the* Antichrist himself.

Regarding the associations of the Antichrist figure with the Roman emperor Constantius II, they can be categorized into two groups: descriptive and declarative. To start with the former, in their denunciation of the emperor as the Antichrist, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer offer descriptive passages where they draw parallelisms between the careers of the two. In their demonstration, they often appeal to the authority of the scriptural passages, thereby try justifying and convincing their audience. Insulting a Christian Roman emperor as the Antichrist must have been a serious allegation; they surely must have been aware of this. Hilary is quite vocal on this matter. At the beginning of his narrative, he says, "If we speak falsely, may our slanderous speech become infamous; but if we demonstrate that everything we say is clearly true, then we do not exceed the apostolic freedom of speech and moderation in making these accusations after a long silence. But perhaps someone will think me rash, because I call Constantius the Antichrist."[107] Hilary presents his outspokenness, "not rashness, but faith; not

[106] Lucifer of Cagliari, *Concerning Athanasius*, I.23, 34. For the translation of this work, I refer to the following: Ashley Beck (tr. and ed.) *Lucifer of Cagliari, Concerning Athanasius: Why no one must judge or condemn a man in his absence* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2020), 89, 115.
[107] Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 6 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 120-121.

thoughtlessness, but reason; not madness, but confidence."[108] He does so by quoting the Scriptures, particularly the moments of biblical *parrhesia*,[109] where John the Baptist stood up against Herod (c. 72 – c. 4 BCE) and a Jewish martyr against the king Antiochus IV (c. 215 – 164 BCE). Hilary likens his courage to speak up against whom he calls the Antichrist to the way the Jewish martyr spoke against Antiochus, who was the inspiration for the little horn found in Daniel 7, as shown in the previous chapter.

Throughout his narrative, Hilary of Poitiers often applies eschatological rhetoric of the coming of the Antichrist and the end of days. He starts his *Against Constantius* with the following:

> It is time for speaking, since the time for being silent has now passed. Let Christ be expected, because the Antichrist has assumed power. Let the shepherds shout, because the hired men have fled. Let us lay down our lives for the sheep, because the thieves have entered and the raging lion prowls. Let us advance to martyrdom by these words, because the angel of Satan has transformed himself into an angel of light. Let us enter through the door, because nobody comes to the Father except through the Son. Let the false prophets be revealed in their peace, because the approved will be made manifest through heresy and schism. Let this tribulation be endured, a tribulation such as there has never been since the creation of the world; but let it be understood that the days are to be shortened for the sake of God's elect.[110]

Hilary's opening words leave the audience with a strong impression that the times they witnessed were really an age when biblical prophecies were becoming fulfilled. He supports this in his narrative by providing the text with biblical quotations. The Antichrist's seizure of power by itself hints at 1 John and Daniel 7. Moreover, the false prophets of 1 John and Matthew 24:11, 24, as well as the unprecedented tribulation of Matthew 24:21, provide him with apocalyptic imagery. In his presentation, the eschatological persecution of the faithful under the rule of the Antichrist has already started, and by including the shortening of the days from

[108] Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 6 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 121.
[109] For more details on the theme of *parrhesia* in these invectives, see Richard Flower, E*mperor and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*, 146-163.
[110] Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 1 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 115.

Matthew 24:22, he encourages his audience to embrace martyrdom. The theme of martyrdom he employs throughout his text is often accompanied by an eschatological rhetoric.

In his *History of the Arians*, Athanasius of Alexandria also draws on biblical parallels in his depiction of Constantius and his deeds as an emperor in the likeness of the Antichrist and his persecution. First, he links the emperor's interventions in ecclesiastical trials with the "abomination of desolation" from Daniel 9:27 and 12:11 (also mentioned in Matthew 24:15), "Such actions are terrible, and beyond terrible, but this behaviour is nevertheless appropriate for someone who is assuming the attributes of the Antichrist. Who could see him ruling over the supposed bishops and presiding over ecclesiastical trials and then not say that this was what Daniel called the abomination of desolation?"[111] For Athanasius, Constantius enters the churches pretending to be a Christian, annuls the canons, and enforces his agenda by using force. Next, he likens the emperor's oppression of Nicene bishops to the persecution of the "son of lawlessness" from 2 Thessalonians 2:3, "Who still dares to say that the present time is peaceful for Christians and not rather a persecution? And it is a persecution the like of which has never occurred before and will probably never be perpetrated by anyone else, except the son of lawlessness, who is already revealed by the enemies of Christ, who create an image of him in themselves."[112] Just like Hilary, Athanasius presents it as an unprecedented tribulation within an eschatological framework.

Then he associates the "falling away" of 2 Thessalonians 2:3 with the so-called "Arian heresy," as he says, "It is therefore absolutely right for us to be sober since otherwise, this heresy might somehow be that falling away after which the Antichrist will be revealed, with

[111] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 77.1 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 107.
[112] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 77.2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 107.

Constantius evidently being his precursor."[113] Notably, the identification of the "Arian heresy" as the "falling away" is in the same exegetical lines that can be found in the *Catechetical Lectures* of Cyril of Jerusalem, who understood the same term as the falling away from the "right faith."[114] At the same time, Athanasius evidently calls Constantius the precursor to the Antichrist, and the emperor's imperial patronage of the "Arians" paves the way to the coming of the Antichrist, "Why has he given orders for the churches to be handed over to the Arians? Has he not done all this so that when the Antichrist comes, he [the Antichrist] may discover how to enter the churches and accept the man who has prepared these places for him?"[115]

In his *On Not Sparing Those Who Commit Offences Against God*, Lucifer of Cagliari addresses the emperor directly in the second person singular and asks:

> You ought not to judge me as insolent because I say you are driven by an impure spirit, that I call you the precursor to the Antichrist; for indeed your speech reveals this to be you; for no one who has the spirit of God could concoct such things as you, Arians, or all your fellow heretics of various sects, assert. You deny that God has a true Son, you say that he is adopted, and you pretend that you do not understand that you are one from among those antichrists revealed by the mouth of John.[116]

Lucifer denounces Constantius as the precursor to the Antichrist and supports his labeling of the emperor with references to the Scriptures. Here, he refers to the "antichrists" of 1 John 2, and for the rest of the chapter, he contrasts Nicene and non-Nicene views of the Trinitarian dispute.

[113] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 77.2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 107.
[114] For Cyril's eschatological exegesis and his interpretation of the "falling away," see the first chapter of this thesis.
[115] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 77.3 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 108.
[116] Lucifer of Cagliari, *On Not Sparing Those Who Commit Offences Against God*, 25.1-8, in G. F. Diercks (ed.), L*uciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt* (CCSL 8, 1978), 25.1-8, p. 242-243: "Non me debes contumeliosum iudicare, quia dicam te inmundo spiritu agi, qui dicam te antichristi paecursorem; os etenim tuum te hoc esse reuelat; neque enim habens spiritum dei poterit talia adstruere quae uos adseritis Arriani aut cuncti uariarum sectarum uestri cohaeretici. Negas deum uerum habere filium, dicis illum esse adoptiuum, et iudicasne non intelectum, quo denim unus sis ex illis antichristis ore pronuntiatis Johannis?" Here, I offer my translation.

Later in his text, Lucifer uses the Book of Daniel in his accusation against the emperor as the precursor to the Antichrist. After quoting the entire text of Daniel's dream of the four beasts and its interpretation (Daniel 7:1-27), he indicates:

> I judged that the entire revelation should be applied to this matter, so that you, at least while reading it, could sufficiently understand that you, tyrants, persecuting the religion of God, were called beasts […] Moreover, you bear the likeliness of that fourth beast, it is evident that you want to fulfill these things which are foretold that [the fourth beast] would fulfill. It is written about the Antichrist, whom you should understand that you are similar to, or even are the beast itself […] by no means you are less, Constantius, in unbelief than the Antichrist; for you do not cease from devouring the servants of God with your iron teeth. What more? The Antichrist will do everything only to make people renegade on the only begotten Son of God.[117]

By appealing to the authority of the Book of Daniel, Lucifer tries to show that his portrayal of Constantius is biblically grounded. What is more interesting here, however, is his association with the emperor, not with the little horn but with the fourth beast of Daniel. As already shown in the first chapter of this thesis, the church exegesis until the fourth century asserted the Roman Empire as the fourth Danielic earthly kingdom doomed to fall before the *Parousia*. Most probably for his rhetorical purposes here, Lucifer does not mention the little horn of the fourth beast but merges the fourth kingdom (i.e., the Roman Empire) with the person of the Roman emperor Constantius II. He does not take the Roman Empire as his polemical target along with the emperor himself. Instead, Lucifer employs all the eschatological rhetoric against the person of Constantius.

In an attempt to justify their direct and/or indirect association of the emperor Constantius II with the Antichrist, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer, offer extensive descriptive

[117] Lucifer of Cagliari, On Not Sparing Those Who Commit Offences Against God in G. F. Diercks (ed.), L*uciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt* 30.7-10; 15-18; 37-40, p. 254-255: "Item ad hoc uniuersam reuelationem censui adplicandam, quo tu tibimet saltim legens satisfacere posses, quod enim uos tyranni persecutores dei religionis bestiae fueritis dicti […] Ceterum quartae illius bestiae te gerere similitudinem, te haec implere esse cupientem quae illa praedictum est quod esset impletura manifestum est. Scriptum est de antichristo cui tu similaris aut ipse esse iudicaris […] Non minor es, Constanti, incredulitate ab antichristo; nam dentibus ferreis dei seruos deuorando non desinis. Quid pluribus? Nihil antichristus acturus est, nisi ut negetur unicus dei filius." The translation is mine.

passages. These sections are constructed in such a way that Constantius is deliberately shown as fulfilling the eschatological prophecies, particularly as *the* precursor to the Antichrist. The descriptions are often accompanied by references and direct quotations from the Christian Scriptures that were recognized as "canonical."[118] To illustrate, the combined use of the Book of Daniel and 1 John provided the figure of the Antichrist as a heretical persecutor ruler. At the same time, the 2 Thessalonians and Matthew 24 offered apocalyptic omens, such as the unprecedented tribulation, the shortening of the days, and the falling away. All this eschatological imagery is used to present Constantius II and his reign as a partial fulfillment of the eschatological prophecies found in the Christian Scriptures. Such a careful framing of their polemical target, the emperor and his rule, proves that the invectives written by Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer were more than just "pure invective." Finding the biblical and exegetical tradition as a potential rhetorical "arsenal," the exiled Nicene bishops carefully framed the person and rule of Constantius II with an eschatological rhetoric with which they promoted the opposition against the emperor's *homoian* ecclesiastical policies.

Moving further with the rather "declarative" association of the emperor with the figure of the Antichrist, Athanasius, and Hilary, at the first instance, may look inconsistent. To illustrate, in his *History of the Arians*, Athanasius sometimes accuses Constantius of "preparing the way for the Antichrist," while he directly calls the emperor the Antichrist himself in some other passages.[119] Similarly, in his *Against Constantius*, Hilary occasionally names him the Antichrist himself or a precursor to him.[120] On the other hand, in his polemical writings written directly to the emperor, such as *On Not Sparing Those Who Commit Offences Against God*,

[118] Note that in none of these writings, there is an explicit reference to the Book of Revelation. Due to its chiliast tone, its authorship and canonical status was disputed in the fourth century. For example, see Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 7.25.1-8.

[119] For the depiction of Constantius as a prelude to the Antichrist, see Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 46.1, 70.1, 71.1, 79.1, 80.1; for Constantius as the Antichrist himself, see Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 67.1.

[120] For the references to Constantius as the precursor to the Antichrist, see Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 7. For Constantius' depiction as the Antichrist himself, see Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 5, 6, 11.

Concerning Athanasius, and *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, Lucifer of Cagliari seems to avoid calling the emperor directly the Antichrist consistently. Still, in several ways, he closely linked the two with each other.[121] Nevertheless, even such declarative typologies need not be disregarded as "empty rhetoric." They often accompany the criticisms directed against the emperor's certain ecclesiastical policies and serve the narrative as "slogans," reminding their audience of the eschatological senses they evoked in the descriptive parts discussed above. The rest of this chapter will be followed by an analysis of how eschatological rhetoric is employed in the criticisms of the emperor's ecclesiastical policies.

Since the authors themselves were banished from their sees and wrote their invectives during their exiles in the late 350s and early in 360, it is hardly surprising that Constantius' policy of exiling Nicene bishops constitutes the main points of these invectives. However, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer did not confine the limits of their invectives only to the emperor's policy of exiling Nicene bishops and handing the churches over to the so-called "Arians." This was just their starting point. They took their criticism a step further and objected to Constantius' direct involvement in the ecclesiastical affairs. Consequently, the Antichrist typology and the eschatological rhetoric that comes with it are often employed in the criticism of such policies and the denial of the emperor's authority in the affairs of the church.

In the *History of the Arians*, after quoting Ossius' letter to Constantius at length in which the bishop of Cordoba protested the emperor's involvement in ecclesiastical affairs, Athanasius relates the exiles of Ossius (c. 256 – 359 CE) and Liberius (310 – 366 CE), bishop of Rome,[122]

[121] Lucifer of Cagliari, *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, 1 (the precursor to the Antichrist), 11 (the friend of the Antichrist); *On Not Sparing Those Who Commit Offences Against God*, 6, 11, 21, 23, 25, 30 (precursor to the Antichrist), 24, 25 (spirit of the Antichrist); *Concerning Athanasius I*, 27 (the precursor to the Antichrist), 33 (servants of the Antichrist), 36 (descendant of the Antichrist), 40 (general of the Antichrist); *Concerning Athanasius II*, 8, 11, 14, 19, (the precursor to the Antichrist), 31 (associate/accomplice of the Antichrist).

[122] Liberius was exiled later in 355, but he was allowed to return to his see after he finally subscribed to Athanasius' condemnation in 357. For Athanasius' retelling of these events concerning Liberius and Ossius, see Athanasius, *History of the Arians*, 35-41, 42-45.

as well as the "false charges" put against and subsequent exiles of Paulinus of Trier, Lucifer of Cagliari, Dionysius of Milan and Eusebius of Vercelli.[123] Athanasius objects to these decisions by calling them "plots" since, at least in his representation of the events, there were no formal charges or official accusations according to the judicial process. He presented the depositions as "[…] zeal for the Arian heresy and a prelude to the coming of the Antichrist, with Constantius preparing the way for him."[124] This is followed by his criticism against the policy of handing over the churches to the rival bishops who were labeled as "Arians." Athanasius retells his banishment from Alexandria by the emperor because of the Arians' "bidding."[125] According to him, the bishops, presbyters, and monks were chained up and beaten by the general appointed by the emperor.[126] As a result, "[the congregations] are watching this preparation for the Antichrist and seeing their property being seized from them and handed over to the heretics."[127] Constantius' policy of exiling Nicene bishops and handing the churches over to the non-Nicenes is put as a prelude to the coming of the Antichrist.

Furthermore, Athanasius considers the appointment of the archdeacon Felix as the bishop of Rome a "transgression" since the ordination ceremony took place in the palace rather than a church, while in the presence of three eunuchs, instead of a congregation, by three bishops whom he calls "spies."[128] He describes this transgression as "something extraordinary

[123] Athanasius had already been condemned at the Council of Sirmium in 351. These bishops were exiled after they refused to agree to the condemnation of Athanasius at the synods of Arles in 353/354 and Milan in 355. For more details on their exiles, see Athanasius, *History of the Arians*, 28-34; Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 10-11, Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 109-120.

[124] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 46.3 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 80.

[125] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 70.2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 99.

[126] Other instances of violence and prison sentences can be found throughout Athanasius' text. See, for instance, Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 61.2-3, 67.1.

[127] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 70.4 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 99-100.

[128] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 75.3. In his translation, Flower notes that Athanasius plays around between the similar words for "bishop" (*ἐπίσκοπος*) and "spy" (*κατάσκοπος*) in Greek; see Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, p. 42 ft. 15, p. 106 ft. 279.

[…] that resembles the Antichrist's perversity."[129] Here, Athanasius displays a spatial confusion of the "ecclesiastical and heavenly" with the "imperial and earthly" spheres and describes it in relation to the figure of the Antichrist. In similar terms, in his joint narration of the synods at Arles in 353/354 and Milan in 355, Athanasius, employing the traditional rhetorical practice of *ethopoeia*, invents a dialogue between the emperor Constantius II and the bishops Paulinus, Lucifer, Eusebius, and Dionysius in the following way:

> At this, Constantius immediately stood up and said 'I am now the prosecutor of Athanasius and so you are to believe whatever they say because of me'. Then they said, 'How can you be a prosecutor when the accused man is absent? If you are a prosecutor but he is absent, he cannot be judged. *This is not a Roman trial, where your word as emperor would be accepted: it is a decision concerning a bishop* [italics are mine]. This judgement has to be fair to both the prosecutor and the defendant. And how can you prosecute him?[130]

Here, too, Athanasius poses a dichotomy of "imperial" and "ecclesiastical" by which he denies the emperor's "earthly" authority over "divine" affairs. Such a rhetorical construction, in turn, allows him to invalidate the emperor's verdicts against himself and his followers. More noteworthy about these two passages discussed above is that they are followed by a reference to the Antichrist figure. Right between the narration of these two episodes, Athanasius inserts, "What of the Antichrist's actions has this man omitted? What would the Antichrist do, when he comes, beyond what that this man has done? When he comes, how will he not find the way ready for deceit and prepared for him in advance by this man?"[131] With the use of the eschatological typology, Athanasius reinforces his criticism by presenting Constantius as partially fulfilling the prophecies of the Antichrist.

[129] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 75.2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 106.
[130] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 76.3-4 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 106-107.
[131] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 76.1-2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 106.

Similarly, in his *Against Constantius*, Hilary summarizes Constantius' policy of banishment both in the eastern and western Mediterranean. He relates how imperial troops drove Athanasius away from his see in Alexandria, comparing it with the wars against Persia. Then he continues with examples from the West, describing how Paulinus of Trier died during his exile in Phrygia in 358, the exile of Liberius of Rome in 355, and his later forced condemnation of Athanasius in exchange for his return to his see in 357, and the exile of Rhodianus of Toulouse with Hilary. The target of Hilary's criticism is deliberately limited to the emperor's ecclesiastical policies, as he says, "I do not record any actions except those performed in the Church; otherwise, I would be mentioning a tyranny other than that against God."[132] According to Hilary, the emperor's ecclesiastical policies resulted in the saint-like bishops' condemnations and depositions, ending up in the mines, whose names instead should have been inscribed on the walls of the churches. By saying, "You terrorized the faith with edicts,"[133] Hilary voices his explicit disapproval of Constantius' involvement in matters of the faith. As a closing remark of the chapter, addressing directly to the emperor in the second person singular, Hilary rhetorically challenges the emperor to disprove his allegations. He strongly asserts, "If my account is a lie, Constantius, then you are a sheep; but if these are truly your actions, then you are the Antichrist."[134] By equating the career of the Antichrist with the emperor's ecclesiastical policies, the latter of which he also called above "tyranny against God," Hilary calls Constantius the Antichrist himself.

Lucifer's *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, on the other hand, revolves mainly around the theme of martyrdom and admittedly does not dwell too much on the details of the emperor's policy of banishment or the Antichrist typology. Yet, this does not mean that either of these is absent in his criticism. At the very beginning of his work, Lucifer rejects Constantius'

[132] Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 11 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 125.
[133] Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 11 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 126.
[134] Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 11 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 127.

authority in church affairs by expressing, "[…] I wanted by this book especially to make it known to your polluted and sacrilegious mind that, in all these matters where you think yourself mighty, you are actually wretched." [135] This is immediately followed by Lucifer's encouragement to endure Constantius' torture and receive martyrdom. He states:

> For we want it clearly established in your mind that you will pass away together with your temporal, tottering, fragile and corruptible kingdom and you will come to eternal punishment, unless you look out for yourself while the opportunity exists, but Christians will assuredly reach eternal rest and will receive an incorruptible kingdom.[136]

Lucifer constructs this dichotomy of Constantius' earthly and temporal empire and the heavenly and eternal kingdom of God that is strongly present throughout his work. Then, he proclaims the emperor as an "enemy of divine religion equipped with fragile weapons" and "the precursor of the Antichrist" who eventually will not be able to defeat "the soldiers of God."[137]

Likewise, Lucifer stresses Constantius' personal involvement in the dispute when he says, "For you recognise that there is nothing more important in human affairs than religion and that it must be defended with the greatest force. You defend it with the sword, but we know that religion must be defended not by killing, but by dying for God and by enduring all these evils that you inflict."[138] Parallel to what he does above, the following lines read, "You say, 'Deny the Son of God, or the power of my rule will destroy you.' How much better it is to be destroyed by Christ's enemy than by Christ! How brilliant is it to be slain by you, the friend of the

[135] Lucifer of Cagliari, *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, 1 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 141. For an analysis of Constantius' personal interest and involvement in theological discussions within a larger framework of imperial institutions of higher education (mainly schools of grammar and rhetoric), see Osed Lössl, "Imperial Involvement in Education and Theology – Constantine to Constantius II," *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 13: 22-41.
[136] Lucifer of Cagliari, *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, 1 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 141.
[137] Lucifer of Cagliari, *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, 1 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 142.
[138] Lucifer of Cagliari, *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, 11 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 173.

Antichrist, and so resurrected by Christ!"[139] Lucifer calls Constantius "the friend of the Antichrist," then provides a series of biblical typologies that the emperor also mimics, such as Judas and Herod. He contrasts these villainous characters with those martyred figures, like John the Baptist, James, John, Peter, and Paul, then adds, "The blessed men whom we just mentioned were also killed for the only Son of God by your fellow tyrants […]."[140] Lucifer's representation of Constantius' reign as an imitator of the career of the Antichrist, along with other biblical figures, evokes the memory of pre-Constantinian persecutions of the Christians.

Such comparisons with earlier "tyrants" and "persecutors" can also be found in the works of Athanasius and Hilary. By means of *synkrisis*, the authors establish a pattern of persecution of the faithful by the "enemies of God," thus presenting the contemporary upheavals as a continuous extension into the present. To give an example, in the *Against Constantius*, Hilary declares the following:

> I proclaim to you, Constantius, what I would have said to Nero, what Decius and Maximian would have heard from me: you fight against God, you rage against the Church, you persecute the saints, you detest those who proclaim Christ, you abolish religion, you are now a tyrant not just in human matters but also divine. The characteristics that I describe are common to both you and those persecutors. Accept them now as your own: you pretend that you are Christian, although you are actually a new enemy of Christ; you are a precursor of the Antichrist and perform the rites of his mysteries.[141]

Hilary puts the Christian Roman emperor Constantius into the same category as earlier pagan Roman "persecutors" based on their character as an enemy of God. Nonetheless, since he was a proclaimed Christian, Constantius' active involvement in the theological disputes is what sets him apart from the rest. Yet, this does not prevent Hilary from labeling the emperor as a "tyrant not just in human matters but also divine." Then, he continues to list Constantius' deeds as he

[139] Lucifer of Cagliari, *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, 11 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 174.
[140] Lucifer of Cagliari, *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, 11 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 175.
[141] Hilary, *Against Constantius*, 7 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 122.

puts them in the likeness of the Antichrist's career. These mainly consist of giving episcopal sees away as gifts, summoning councils and forcing his own agenda, terrorizing the Church with his arms, confining bishops in a city, etc.

In a similar manner, in the *History of the Arians*, Athanasius contrasts the contemporary turmoils with those of the past and stresses the "novelty" of the former. To give an illustration, his criticism of the seizure of Nicene churches and handing them over to the non-Nicenes is followed by, in his words:

> When has such great lawlessness ever been heard of before? When has anything so evil ever happened during persecution? The earlier persecutors were Hellenes, but they did not bring their idols into the churches. Zenobia was a Jewess and championed Paul of Samosata, but she did not hand the churches over to the Jews to be used as synagogues. This is a new abomination. This is not simply a persecution: it is more than a persecution – it is the prelude and preparation for the Antichrist.[142]

Athanasius reminds the earlier persecutors of the Christians, and their comparison with that of his own day points out the latter as an unprecedented persecution in the likeness of the Antichrist's propheticized persecution at the end of days.

Moreover, Athanasius takes a step further and asserts, "[…] who still dares to say that this Costyllius is a Christian and not rather the likeness of the Antichrist? For what marks of the Antichrist are absent? How will he [the Antichrist] not be thought to be this man [Constantius] in every respect, and how would this man not be assumed to be the same as him?"[143] In the subsequent lines, he quotes the prophecy on the little horn from Daniel 7, particularly his war against the saints, subduing of other three kings, speaking against the Most High, and his attempt to change laws, then adds, "Who has ever attempted to do these things

[142] Athanasius, *History of the Arians*, 71.1 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 100.
[143] Athanasius, *History of the Arians*, 74.1 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 104. Flower notes that Costyllius is the diminutive form of the name Constantius. See the ft. 268 on the same page.

except Constantius? For he is the kind of person that the Antichrist would be."[144] The quotations from Daniel 7:21 and 24-25 serve as the scriptural basis for Athanasius' depiction of Constantius as the fulfillment of the Antichrist typology. He equates "war against the saints" with the emperor's policy of exiling bishops and the "subduing of the three kings" with his depositions of Vetranio, Magnentius, and Gallus.[145] Further, in Athanasius' depiction, Constantius spoke against God when he gave his support for the "Arian heresy" and changed the customs of the Church by devising new forms of appointments.[146]

Lastly, before moving to the second section of this chapter, it is worth concluding that the use of the Antichrist typology should not necessarily be taken literally. Following Smith's take on how allegories and metaphors work,[147] typologies can also be taken not literally but rather evocative. This is how the typologies used in these invectives, that of the Antichrist and others, should be regarded. Sometimes starting from the abstract idea of the Antichrist figure and moving to the concrete person of Constantius, or vice-versa, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer appeal to the idea of a partial fulfillment of the biblical prophecy in the person and career of the emperor. Such a rhetorical construction did not have to be true; it only needed to be persuasive. By drawing typological parallelisms and biblical prophecies, these authors constructed an image of the emperor as a *mimesis* of the figure of the Antichrist. Through such scriptural "lenses," the biblical "Other" and the "people of God" are presented.

With typological use of the other biblical figures, like Ahab, the pharaoh, and Pilate, the distant "memory" of the Old and New Testaments is called. As Richard Flower puts it, "This

[144] Athanasius, *History of the Arians*, 74.3 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 104.
[145] Vetranio, the former *magister peditum* of Constans, was proclaimed emperor after Constans' murder by the usurper Magnentius in 350. Soon later, Vetranio was forced to abdicate in Constantius' favor (*History of the Arians*, 50.1). Magnentius ruled in the West between 350 and 353 until he was defeated by Constantius (*History of the Arians*, 30.3). Gallus was *caesar* in 351 and married to Constantius' sister Constantina, but later he was executed in 354. For more bibliographic entry, see Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives Against Constantius II*, 104 ft. 272.
[146] Athanasius, *History of the Arians*, 74. 3-4 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 104.
[147] Christine Smith, "Christian Rhetoric in Eusebius' Panegyric at Tyre," 236.

use of scriptural paradigms eroded the boundaries between the canonical past and contemporary events to create a 'biblical present.'"[148] To this, I would add that by invoking a partial fulfillment of the biblical prophecy, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer bring the eschatological future near the historical present. In return, the audience of these invectives is invited to imagine themselves witnessing a crucial episode of the Christian "History of Salvation," and they are encouraged to participate in it on the "right side."

II.2: Spreading the Word: Questions of Audience, Circulation, and Purpose

This brings the discussion to the questions that the second part of this chapter will address: the possible audiences and their receptions, and circulation. It is worth reminding that these texts were written during the late 350s and early in 360 when ecclesiastical politics reached its climax.[149] After the Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia in later 359, the emperor Constantius II was more inclined to accept the *Homoian* Creed drafted by Acacius of Caesarea. This crystallized in the Council of Constantinople led by Acacius in January 360. The council, in accordance with decisions of the Council of Nike, declared that all *ousia* language was to be condemned and defined the relationship between the Son and the Father as *homoios*. The Council of Constantinople in 360 was to be held "Orthodox" instead of that of Nicaea in 325. By this time, Nicene bishops Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer had been in exile since the mid-350s and were alienated from mainstream ecclesiastical politics. Their invectives, in a sense, represent the "last stand" of the Nicene party in the long "Arian controversy."

The possible audiences of these texts have been well discussed in the scholarship. After his forced removal from his see in Alexandria in 356, Athanasius went hiding in Upper Egypt

[148] Richard Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*, 109.
[149] For more details, see Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 136-151.

and wrote his *Historia Arianorum* in late 357. Timothy D. Barnes thinks that the *Historia Arianorum* addressed, if it had an intended audience, the Egyptian monks sympathetic to him.[150] David. M. Gwynn disagrees with Barnes' argument for an exclusive monastic audience and argues that it was written for a wider but still Egyptian audience.[151] Hilary was exiled at the Council of Beziers, or soon after, and he went to Phrygia, then attended the Council of Seleucia in 359. Barnes demonstrates that he wrote the *Against Constantius* in the year 360.[152] Probably due to the proclamation of Julian as Augustus in Paris in 360, Hilary could return from his exile in the eastern part of the empire, and his work circulated among Gallic bishops.[153] Lastly, Lucifer was exiled after attending the Council of Milan in 355. Like Hilary, he was also sent to the eastern part of the empire, first to Germanicia in Cilicia, then to Palestine, and finally to Thebaid in Egypt. All of his polemical treatises were written during his exile, *De non Conveniendo cum Haereticis* in 357-358, *De Regibus Apostacicis* in 358, *De Athanasio* during 359-360, *De non Parcendo in Deum Delinqentibus* in 360, and *Moriundum Esse pro Dei Filio* after the Council of Constantinople in January 360.[154] Despite Jerome's statement that Lucifer sent his writings to Constantius directly, it is unlikely that the emperor himself ever read

[150] Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 126.
[151] David M. Gwynn, *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the 'Arian Controversy,'* Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford University Press, 2007), 41-42.
[152] In his *Illustrious Men*, 100, Jerome thinks that probably because of its highly polemical tone, Hilary wrote his *Against Constantius* after the emperor's death. In his *Hilary de Poitiers: Contre Constance* (Sources Chrétiennes 334, 1987) 29-38, A. Rocher argues that even though Hilary started writing in 358, he only finished it after the death of Constantius on 3 November 361. Barnes rejects this and convincingly argues that the entirety of the Against Constantius dates to January or February 360. See, Timothy D. Barnes, "Review of Rocher," *JTS*, N.S. 39 (1988) 609-11; idem, "Hilary of Poitiers on His Exile, *Vigilae Christianae*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (1992), 129-140, especially ft. 10. Also see, Richard Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*, 88, ft. 35.
[153] The circumstances of Hilary's return from his exile to Gaul are not clear about whether with or without the emperor's consent. For a brief summary of its discussion, see Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 28-29, especially ft. 137.
[154] For the chronology of Lucifer's polemical works, see G. F. Diercks (ed.), L*uciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt* (CCSL 8, 1978), xviii-xxv.

these.[155] After all, as Flower rightly concludes, because these texts were potentially dangerous, they probably circulated among fellow Nicene Christians and like-minded supporters.[156]

Elsewhere, Flower presents a thoughtful study about how different literary discourses, such as invectives, historical narratives, or letters, construct different forms of "textual communities" in exile.[157] His study also provides insight into how the polemical texts discussed above might have been received by their respective audiences. According to him, the discourses of martyrdom and *parrhesia* found in these texts offer a sense of collective suffering of the "Orthodox faithful" and their opposition to the "heretical tyranny." For the works of Hilary and Lucifer, which have the literary form of invective, Flower asserts, "To receive such a work, to read or hear it, even alone, enrolled an individual in an exclusive group, spatially dispersed, but united in this imagined, theatrical scene through having been trusted with such a dangerous and inflammatory text."[158] On the other hand, Athanasius' polemical historical narrative on the "Arians" establishes a literary network that simplifies the complexities of ecclesiastical politics. By putting himself alone directly in opposition against the emperor, Athanasius presents himself and other Nicene bishops to his audience, in Flower's words, "[…] as a community of embattled believers brought together through their support for and deference towards, the exiled bishop of Alexandria."[159]

After all, it is tempting to ask whether the simultaneous appearance of these invectives could be considered as part of a unified campaign. Based on the references to each other found

[155] For Jerome's statement, see Jerome, *Illustrious Men* 95. Lucifer perhaps did send his book to the emperor as his correspondence with Constantius' *magister officiorum*, Florentius, is preserved. See, G. F. Diercks (ed.), L*uciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt* (CCSL 8, 1978), 305.
[156] Richard Flower, "Witnesses for the Persecution: Textual Communities of Exile under Constantius II," *Studies in Late Antiquity*, Vol. 3, Number 3, 360.
[157] Richard Flower, "Witnesses for the Persecution: Textual Communities of Exile under Constantius II," *Studies in Late Antiquity*, Vol. 3, Number 3, 337-368.
[158] Richard Flower, "Witnesses for the Persecution," 351.
[159] Richard Flower, "Witnesses for the Persecution," 341.

in their works, Athanasius and Lucifer definitely knew about each other.[160] Although it is possible that these authors might have heard about each other's works against the emperor, there is no concrete evidence for suggesting a closely coordinated unified campaign of the Nicene bishops. As Flower notes, Hilary's *Against Constantius* is found in a manuscript along with his other works in Cagliari. This may indicate that Hilary sent some of his writings to Lucifer, even though there is no way to know for sure whether Lucifer brought these works with himself after his return from his exile and Constantius' death in 361.[161] Also, the two extant letters in Latin, allegedly sent by Athanasius to Lucifer, are already proven to be ancient forgeries written by a follower of Lucifer.[162] Nevertheless, these letters are still interesting in one aspect.

In the first letter, pseudo-Athanasius speaks of one of Lucifer's writings that he heard about and asks for a copy. In the second letter, after the supposed delivery of the aforementioned copy, pseudo-Athanasius replies to Lucifer, talking about how the former appreciates the latter's writing about Athanasius,[163] his exhortations to martyrdom,[164] and, more interestingly, how he called the Arians the "slaves of the Antichrist" (*mancipia antichristi*).[165] Probably, the writing pseudo-Athanasius refers to in the letter is Lucifer's *Concerning Athanasius*, where Lucifer does call the Arians "the servants of the Antichrist" (*famuli antichristi*).[166] Pseudo-

[160] Lucifer wrote a defense of Athanasius, known as *Concerning Athanasius*, while Athanasius mentions Lucifer among other Western bishops who were exiled because of their support for Athanasius; see Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 33.6, 41.1, 46.1, 76.3. Hilary, on the other hand, seems knowledgeable about the circumstances which led to Lucifer's exile; see, Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 2.
[161] Richard Flower, *Emperor and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*, 123-124, ft. 204.
[162] G.F. Diercks, CCL 8 (1978), 306-310. The editor of the Luciferian corpus labeled these letters as Pseudo-Athanasius. For the argument proving that these letters are ancient forgeries, see, L. Saltet, "Fraudes littéraires des schismatiques Luciférien aux 4ème et 5ème siècles," BHE 1906, 300-326.
[163] *Epistula ps. Athanasii ad Luciferum* in G. F. Diercks (ed.), L*uciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt* (CCSL 8, 1978), 309, 68-69: "Nam de his quae scripsisti de nomine meo erubesco aliquid proferre, ne uidear adulator […]"
[164] *Epistula ps. Athanasii ad Luciferum* in G. F. Diercks (ed.), L*uciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt* (CCSL 8, 1978), 308-309, 48-49: "Quam bona et iocunda hortamenta tua ad martyrium […]"
[165] *Epistula ps. Athanasii ad Luciferum* in G. F. Diercks (ed.), L*uciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt* (CCSL 8, 1978), 310, 91-93: "Sed deo gratias, dum haec agunt, tanto magis et plus execrantur ab omnibus et cognoscuntur uere, ut dixit sanctitas tua, mancipia esse antichristi […]"
[166] Lucifer, *De Athanasio I* in G. F. Diercks (ed.), L*uciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt* (CCSL 8, 1978), 33.25-29: "sed et cum negetis christum unicum dei filium et confiteamini credidisse uos in antichristum, unde aut

Athanasius deliberately picked, among others, the theme of martyrdom and the phrase relating the "Arians" to the "antichrists" of 1 John in order to refer to the book without necessarily mentioning its name. Though admittedly speculative, this might be more reflective of the way in which the writing is received and, even perhaps, remembered. Indeed, the author of the epistle was not any "neutral" recipient of Lucifer's work or Athanasius but a follower of Lucifer who had their own agenda for forging such a letter. Yet, despite whatever motivation they might have, the way the book was described indirectly, but specifically with a focus on the martyrdom discourse and the association of the Antichrist with the "Arians" may potentially be taken as an indicator of how typologies might function outside of the text, particularly in its reception. Though such a conjecture must also be tested with other instances,[167] it is not unlikely, at least in this case, that the discourse of martyrdom and the typology of the Antichrist played a role in the reception of these polemical writings during their circulation.

Returning to the question of circulation, Flower offers a plausible interpretation, as he says, "While there may have been some communication and cross-fertilisation, as well as influences from other inflammatory texts that are no longer extant, overall these polemics should be regarded as products of the same literary and political milieu, representing distinct reactions to their authors' common situation as exiles under a "heretical" emperor."[168] It is also probable that these invectives were written in response to other contemporary non-Nicene writings that were more sympathetic to the emperor himself or his ecclesiastical policies. I find it equally likely that due to the increased marginalization of the Nicene party in ecclesiastical politics during the late 350s, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer, from their localized (but not

quomodo uos poteritis Christi probare seruos, cum manifestaretis uosmet uestra professione esse famulos antichristi?"

[167] For instance, Jerome says that Lucifer wrote against Constantius and sent it to him, but he does not mention any of his charges against the emperor while making a notice of his "willingness to meet martyrdom." See Jerome, *Illustrious Men*, 95.

[168] Richard Flower, *Emperor and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*, 124.

necessarily isolated) positions, were offering counter-narratives alternative to the pro-Constantian discourses.

Conclusion

Just as the "Constantinian turn" offered new opportunities to praise a Christian Roman emperor, it also provided new creative possibilities to criticize another one on biblical grounds. In return, the three Nicene bishops' calling Constantius the "Antichrist" also indicate a turning point in the intellectual history of Christian eschatology. The two mainstream interpretations of the ambiguous figure of the Antichrist, either as a heretic posing an internal threat or as an external persecutor, merged together in the person of Constantius, a heretical persecutor posing himself as a Christian. In summary, this chapter argues that these invectives are more than "mere slanders." The Antichrist typology accompanies the criticism of the emperor's ecclesiastical policies, especially handing over the Nicene churches to the "Arians" and sending the "orthodox" bishops into exile. Drawing biblical parallelisms with contemporary ecclesiastical politics, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer present the "Arian heretics" as antichrists following their imperial patron, Constantius the Antichrist. As the new enemy of God, their actions fulfill the eschatological prophecies persecuting the faithful.

Chapter 3: Rhetoric of Eschatology in the Fourth Century

Introduction

Having related the ways in which the Antichrist typology is employed in the invectives against the emperor Constantius II, the present chapter explores possible broader implications of the use of eschatological rhetoric on conceptions of ideal Christian kingship and attempts to find an equilibrium between the empire and the church. However, one cannot just avoid examining these invectives together with the Constantinian panegyrics written by Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260/265 – 339 CE). Therefore, in this last chapter, first, I address Eusebius' eschatological praise of Constantine I's reign in the *Tricennial Oration* and reflect on its reception in the scholarship known as "imperial eschatology." This is followed up by a brief discussion of different portrayals of Constantine I (c. 272 – 337 CE) in the panegyrical and polemical writings of Eusebius, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer. In the second part of this chapter, I investigate the role of eschatological rhetoric in competing rhetorical discourses of rival Christian groups concerning the emperor Constantius II and his ecclesiastical policies. This is complemented by a brief analysis of two other instances, such as the case of Donatism and the so-called "apostate" emperor Julian, where eschatological rhetoric is again employed in responding to their specific historical contexts.

As a result, I emphasize that the late antique Christian eschatology is a double-edged sword, and the usage of eschatological rhetoric, *both* in panegyrical and invective literary discourses, is an indispensable part of the *dynamic* process of making ideal Christian rulership in the fourth century. I will also argue that the rhetoric of eschatology can be taken as an indicator of the deliberate positioning of the Roman emperor in the teleologically oriented Christian "History of Salvation" *in response to* the changing circumstances of different

Christian groups in the fourth century. All in all, I suggest considering all those different usages of the rhetoric of eschatology as reflective of Christian anxieties and insecurities about their status in the changing circumstances in the fourth century Mediterranean World.

III.1. Eusebian Constantine and the Christian Roman Empire

Not so many late antique pieces of literature have received so much scholarly attention than the Constantinian writings of Eusebius of Caesarea. After he declared the triumph of Christianity at the end of his *Ecclesiastical History* with the emperor Constantine I's public embracement of Christianity and his victory over the "enemies of God," Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* and *Tricennial Oration* sketched the ideal Christian kingship. The former's depiction of the emperor Constantine as a "new Moses," liberating God's persecuted people, is indeed unprecedented in Christian literature.[169] The Moses typology often accompanies Eusebius' portrait of the emperor as a "bishop," or if Eusebius is to be believed, Constantine's self-stylization as the "bishop of those outside the church" (*ὁ ἐπίσκοπος τῶν ἐκτὸς τῆς ἐκκλησίας*).[170] According to Eusebius, Constantine embraced his role as a "bishop" so that he was the one who inserted the term *homoousios* into the Nicene Creed.[171] The Eusebian political

[169] Eusebius applied the Moses typology to Constantine firstly in his retelling of Constantine's victory over Maxentius in his *Ecclesiastical History*, 9.9.3-8. Later in his *Life of Constantine*, Eusebius builds upon this motif and extends it throughout his work. For the relevant literature, see Averil Cameron, "Eusebius of Caesarea and the Rethinking of History," in E. Gabba (ed), *Tria Corda: Scritti in Onore di Arnaldo Momigliano* (Como: 1983), 71-88; idem., "Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* and the Construction of Constantine," in M. J. Edwards and S. Sweain (eds), *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature in of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: 1997), 145-174.

[170] Here, I slightly changed the word order. For the original, see Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*, 4.24 in F. Winkelmann, *Eusebius Werke, Band 1.1: Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin [Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975]. On how the Moses typology and Eusebius' presentation of Constantine as a "bishop" complement each other, along with some other descriptions like "friend of God" or "servant of God," see Claudia Rapp, "Imperial Ideology in the Making: Eusebius of Caesarea on Constantine as 'Bishop,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Vol. 49, Pt. 2 (Oxford University Press, 1998), 685–695.

[171] On the role of Constantine in the Council of Nicaea, see Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), 208-223; for Eusebius' letter to his diocese, particularly see 216, ft. 73.

thought offered the basis for what would be labeled as the Byzantine imperial ideology in the scholarship.[172]

More relevant for the present study is the secondary literature on Christian and/or Byzantine eschatology. First, though, the relevant passage should be offered. In the summer of 336, in the new imperial residence Constantinople, bishops and other officials joined the celebrations of the emperor Constantine's thirtieth regnal year. On 25 July 336, Eusebius of Caesarea delivered an oration in the presence of the emperor and his household.[173] In his panegyric, Eusebius praised the emperor and the appointment of his sons as *Caesar* in every tenth year of his reign as follows:

> And He [God] allows him [Constantine] to carry out every one of his celebrations with great relief from the burden of sole rule, having readied some one of his sons for partnership in the royal throne at each tenth anniversary, as if to prolong the bloom of a flourishing plant. First, He [God] appointed his [Constantine] father's namesake during the first decade of his imperial cycle as a partner for a portion of the Empire; and second, in the second decade, the second in age; likewise, the third in the third decade, that of the celebration now in hand. And now also for the fourth recurring period, as if to prolong his time into the distance, He [God] enlarges his [Constantine] Imperial power by the ungrudging association of his relatives. And so, by the appointment of the Caesars, He [God] fulfills the predictions of the divine prophets, which ages and ages ago proclaimed that "the saints of the Most High shall take up the kingdom [Daniel 7:18]"[174]

This specific quotation from the Book of Daniel refers to the destruction of the fourth earthly kingdom (by extension, the kingdom of the little horn) by the son of man and the subsequent establishment of the heavenly and eternal kingdom of God. In his oration, Eusebius associates

[172] The question of to what extent Eusebius' Constantinian panegyrical writings were influential in his own lifetime and the subsequent Byzantine period is disputed. According to Barnes, Eusebius was no "court theologian" and did not meet with the emperor on more than four occasions in the time span of eleven years; see Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 266. Also, Antony Kaldellis argues for the unpopularity of Eusebius' writings in Byzantium and suggests "to stop treating Eusebios as the Founding Father of Byzantine thought;" see Anthony Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 177.

[173] The celebrations started after the Council of Constantinople when Marcellus of Ancyra was deposed. For more details, see Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, 266.

[174] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Tricennial Oration*, 3.1-2 in H.A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 86-87.

the appointment of Constantine's sons as Caesar with the takeover of God's kingdom by the saints of the Most High. Compared to the rather hostile associations of the Roman Empire with the fourth Danielic kingdom, as shown in the first chapter, Eusebius' typological employment in such a pro-imperial way was indeed a novelty.

The scholarship has treated Eusebius' eschatological remark above literally and regarded it as the fulfillment of the biblical prophecy and, even more so, a "realized eschatology." For instance, in his influential study on Byzantine eschatology, Gerhard Podskalsky made a distinction between "Christian" and "Byzantine" eschatology in which the former waited for the destruction of the earthly order and the establishment of the heavenly one, while the latter tried to justify the existence of earthly imperial power.[175] According to Podskalsky, in Eusebius' speech, the Roman Empire merged with the kingdom of Christ.[176] Also, Paul Magdalino, after highlighting the "gap" between Byzantine imperial ideology and the Christian apocalyptic tradition in similar terms to Podskalsky, asserts, "The only eschatology which imperial ideology could accept was one which played down the significance of the events between the fall of the empire and the Second Coming, but stressed, instead, the extent to which the kingdom of God was already being anticipated, or even realized, in the Roman Empire."[177] For Magdalino, such an eschatology was first found in Eusebius and finally formulated in the sixth century by Kosmas lndikopleustes.[178] Lastly, Stephen Shoemaker regards the conversion of Constantine as the "watershed moment" and Eusebius as the "architect" of the political ideology since, in his words, "Eusebius here [the *Tricennial Oration*]

[175] Gerhard Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie: Die Periodisierung der Weltgeschichte in den vier Grossreichen (Daniel 2 und 7) und dem tausendjährigen Friedensreiche (Apok. 20); Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1972), 101-103.
[176] "Damit ist zwar nicht in Worten, aber in der Sache das römische Reich mit dem Reich Christi verschmolzen," in Gerhard Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie*, 12.
[177] Paul Magdalino, "The History of the Future and Its Uses: Prophecy, Policy and Propaganda," in *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol on His Seventieth Birthday, ed. Roderick Beaton and Charlotte Roueché* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), 10.
[178] Paul Magdalino, "The History of the Future and Its Uses," 10-11.

equates Constantine with Christ, and likewise, the empire with Christ's heavenly Kingdom. In effect, the coming kingdom of God that Christ promised has now been realized, according to Eusebius, in the Roman Empire."[179] In all these accounts, Eusebius' *Tricennial Oration* stands out as *the* defining point of Christian eschatology as it introduced the notion of "imperial eschatology" that equips the gradually Christianizing imperial order with prophetic approval and ideological justification.

In his recent article, Christopher Bonura raises his objection to this common interpretation in the scholarship and urges for a reconsideration of the concept of the "Byzantine imperial eschatology."[180] Instead, he instead highlights the *Tricennial Oration*'s rhetorical context that has been mostly overlooked in the scholarship on Christian eschatology. According to Bonura, the *Tricennial Oration* is foremost a panegyric and not a thesis on political theology.[181] Similar concerns have been raised by some other scholars, too. For example, Michael J. Hollerich emphasizes the ecclesiastical character of Eusebius as an apologist and exegete and indicates, "But the sacralized imperialism in these works [the Life of Constantine and the Tricennial Oration] owes much to rhetorical convention and is an insufficient basis for a comprehensive statement of Eusebius's views on church and empire."[182] Nevertheless, this is not to downgrade the importance of the rhetoric but to urge a change of scholarly attitude toward it. Bonura suggests taking the eschatological allusions of Eusebius' oration as rather evocative and/or typological.[183] Consequently, he offers to consider Eusebius' typological association of

[179] Stephen J. Shoemaker, *The Apocalypse of Empire: Imperial Eschatology in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 40.
[180] Looking at Eusebius' exegetical writings, particularly the *Proof of the Gospels* and the *Commentary on Isaiah*, Bonura claims that Eusebius shows consistent adherence to the late antique eschatological tradition of the church in identifying the Roman Empire as the earthly and temporal fourth Danielic kingdom. Bonura does acknowledge, however, that Eusebius was more optimistic about positive cooperation between the Christian Church and the Roman Empire under the rule of Constantine. See, Christopher Bonura, "The Roman Empire, and the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy: Reassessing Byzantine Imperial Eschatology in the Age of Constantine," *Church History* 90 (2021), 509-536.
[181] Christopher Bonura, "The Roman Empire, and the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy," 530.
[182] Michael J. Hollerich, "Religion and Politics in the Writings of Eusebius: Reassessing the First 'Court Theologian,'" *Church History,* Vol. 59.3 (Sep. 1990), 314.
[183] Christopher Bonura, "The Roman Empire, and the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy," 531.

the Roman Empire with the kingdom of God as a *mimesis*.[184] His take on the issue can be supported by further examples from Eusebius' oration itself. Soon after the passage quoted above, Eusebius says, "Thus outfitted in the likeness of the kingdom of heaven, he [Constantine] pilots affairs below with an upward gaze, to steer by the archetypal form."[185] Then, For Eusebius, the Roman Empire was not the actualization of the heavenly kingdom of God on earth but the earthly reflection of it.

As shown above, the scholarship has paid almost exclusive attention to Eusebius' panegyrical writings on Constantine. Nonetheless, the direct and/or indirect associations of Constantius II with the Antichrist have not received enough scholarly interest on the subject of Christian eschatology and the discussions surrounding the notion of "imperial eschatology." Nonetheless, I think the typological employment of eschatological rhetoric is applicable to the polemical writings against Constantius II. Yet, I do not intend to take such eschatological accusations made against Constantius literally and insist on a grand theory of exclusively anti-imperial discourse of Christian eschatology. I find this attitude rather "essentialist" and do not think it contributes to the discussion of late antique Christian eschatology further. Instead, following Bonura's line of thought, the employment of eschatological rhetoric, in this case the figure of the Antichrist in the person of Constantius, should be seen as "evocative," too. With their polemical attitude against Constantius II in the invectives, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer reevaluate the Eusebian ideal of Christian rulership. Also, they interpret the contemporary upheavals in the ecclesiastical politics of the mid-fourth century from a religious standpoint[186]

[184] Christopher Bonura, "The Roman Empire, and the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy," 526.
[185] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Tricennial Oration*, 3.5 in H.A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine*, 87. Also, Bonura notes that Eusebius here alludes to a passage in Plato's Republic (6.488d-e); see Christopher Bonura, "The Roman Empire, and the Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy," 526-527.
[186] Here, I follow Hollerich's statements on Eusebius' conception of history in a parallel way: "[Eusebius' apologetic conception of history] encouraged him to incorporate the present into an ongoing, biblically grounded *demonstratio evangelica*. From this religious perspective, naive though it might be, he judged the epochal events of his time. History, and therefore politics, was assessed from a religious standpoint, and not the other way around," in Michael J. Hollerich, "Religion and Politics in the Writings of Eusebius," 324.

and present the emperor's non-Nicene ecclesiastical policies as partial fulfillment of the biblical prophecies leading to the *eschaton*. Such deliberate and antithetical positionings of Constantine by Eusebius, on the one hand, and Constantius II by Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer, on the other, may better be taken as indicators of Christian anxieties and responses to their changing circumstances in the fourth century.[187]

III.2. *Constantini* in Panegyrical and Invective Literary Discourses

Eusebius' Constantinian writings indeed offered novel aspects of ideal kingship. His conception of an ideal ruler, realized in the person of Constantine, whose empire is the earthly reflection of God's kingdom,[188] himself is like a "new Moses," saving the believers by defeating the persecutor enemies of God,[189] and acts like a "universal bishop" in matters of faith, convoking councils, participating in the discussions, and promoting peace and unity without the presence of his soldiers.[190] On the other hand, the ideal Christian ruler for Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer was the exact opposite of their representation of Constantius II, a Nicene Orthodox. In their conceptualization of ideal Christian rulership, orthodoxy was *sine qua non*, the absence of which made Constantius a heretical tyrant in the likeness of the Antichrist. Accordingly, the Eusebian Constantine differs from that of Athanasius and Hilary and even more so of Lucifer.

Different *Constantini* in the invectives of Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer have already been pointed out by Mark Humphries and later by Flower. According to their analysis, Athanasius and Hilary apply *synkrisis* to highlight Constantius' "heresy," the byproduct of

[187] Richard Flower also highlights the Christian insecurities in the fourth century but does not attribute a special role to its eschatological expression; see Richard Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*, 228.
[188] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Tricennial Oration*, 3.1-2 in H.A. Drake, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 86-87.
[189] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 9.9.1-7 in C. F. Crusé (tr) *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition* (Peabody, Massachusetts: 2004), 343-344.
[190] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*, 1.44 in Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (tr and comm), *Eusebius, Life of Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 87-88.

which was a "Nicene Orthodox" Constantine, while Lucifer stresses the later years of Constantine's reign when he was acquainted with the "Arians."[191] To illustrate, Lucifer does not see Constantius' imperial patronage of the "Arians" as a break away from that of his father but rather as a continuous policy from Constantine to Constantius. He even goes as far as to suggest that Constantius could rule because of his father Constantine's support to the "Arians."[192] On the other hand, Athanasius presents Constantius' "heresy" as a disrespectful act to his father and even displays his first exile in 335 to Gaul by Constantine as a way to protect himself from the plotting of the "Eusebians." [193] Likewise, Hilary emphasizes Constantine's earlier support of the Council of Nicaea, calls Constantius a " rebel against your father's piety," and urges him to "hear the professed faith of your father."[194] Clearly, Athanasius and Hilary reinvent an orthodox Constantine as a point of comparison by which Constantius' departure from his father's ecclesiastical stance is criticized, whereas Lucifer's reconstruction of Constantine puts Constantius as a worthy successor of the "heretical" Constantine.

III.3. Competing Discourses: Constantius II as the "Bishop of Bishops" or the Antichrist

Just as there are different portrayals of the emperor Constantine I as a Christian, a Nicene Orthodox, or an Arian heretic, it is not unlikely that there might have been drastically different portraits of his son, the emperor Constantius II. Unfortunately, however, not many pieces of ancient literature survive to this day that are more sympathetic to the emperor or his

[191] Mark Humphries, "In Nomine Patris: Constantine the Great and Constantius II in Christological Polemic," *Historia Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* (4th Qtr., 1997), especially 454-462; also see Richard Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*, 89-97.
[192] Lucifer of Cagliari, *De Regibus Apostaticis*, VI.18-20 in G. F. Diercks (ed.), L*uciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt*, 147; also see Richard Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*, 93.
[193] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 50.1-2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 82-83. Athanasius also stresses Constantine's condemnation of Arius as a heretic at the Council of Nicaea but makes no mention of his later acceptance of Arius into communion.
[194] Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 27 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius*, 139-140.

ecclesiastical policies. To give some examples, before his departure to Gaul, Julian (331 – 363 CE) wrote and probably delivered a panegyrical oration to Constantius in 355, where he praised the emperor's imperial lineage reaching back to the emperor Claudius Gothicus (214 – 270 CE).[195] Julian also had his own reasons to criticize the same person. In his *Letter to the Senate and People of Athens* written in 361, in order to justify his elevation to the rank of Augustus and his march against the emperor Constantius to the populace of the city, Julian relates his unjust treatment by Constantius, like the murders of his family members without a trial and confiscation of his family property.[196] Julian also accuses him of being under the influence of court eunuchs and presents him as untrustworthy.[197] In the *Caesars*, written in Constantinople after the death of Constantius in 361, Julian asserts that gods punished Constantine I and his sons because of their Christianity and kin slaying.[198] Similar charges can also be found in the *History* of Ammianus Marcellinus (c.330 – c.391 – 400 CE). Marcellinus talks about his "vices," accusing the emperor of his kin slaying, describing him as an unjust and cruel ruler, often under the influence of his wives, eunuchs, and courtiers.[199] Even more so relevant for this chapter is Marcellinus' complaint of Constantius for his disturbance of Christian faith as he caused more controversies by his involvement in Christian affairs and his allowance of bishops to abuse the *cursus publicus* for their travels from one synod to another.[200]

In addition to these rather non-Christian sources, no non-Nicene Christian and pro-Constantian accounts survived in their entirety, except for one. The Eunomian Philostorgius

[195] Julian, *Oration I*, 6c-10a in Wilmer C. Wright (tr.), *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, Vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 16-26.
[196] Julian, *Letter to the Senate and People of Athens*, 270c-d, 273b in Wilmer C. Wright (tr.), *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, Vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann and New York: The Macmillan Co., 1913), 248-249, 254- 255.
[197] Julian, *Letter to the Senate and People of Athens*, 272d, 274a-b, 286c in Wilmer C. Wright (tr.), *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, Vol. 2, 252-253, 256-257, 286-287.
[198] Julian, *Caesars*, 336-ab in Wilmer C. Wright (tr.), *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, Vol. 2, 412-413.
[199] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, 21.16.8, 10-11, 16 in J. C. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus: Roman History, Books 20-26*, Loeb Classical Library 315 (Harvard University Press, 1940), 176-183.
[200] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, 21.16.18 in C. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus: Roman History, Books 20-26*, 182-185.

(368 – c. 439 AD) wrote a non-Nicene *Ecclesiastical History* which only survived as an epitome written by Photius of Constantinople in the ninth century. In his more sympathetic portrayal of the emperor Constantius II, Philostorgius justifies Constantius' killing of his other family members by presenting it as revenge for the murder of Constantine I.[201] Moreover, he praises Constantius' Christianity by attributing the constructions of the Church of Hagia Sophia, and the Church of the Holy Apostles to him, as well as translation of the relics of Andrew, Luke, and Timothy.[202] Last but not least, Philostorgius relates an incident reminiscent of Constantine's victory against Maxentius at the battle of Milvian Bridge in 312, when a sign of the cross encircled by a rainbow crown appeared in the sky in 351 on the Pentecost.[203] According to him, the sign appeared at Jerusalem and was visible to the usurper Magnentius' military camp. Philostorgius interprets it as a God-sent sign for Constantius' victory over his rival Magnentius. The fifth century church historian Sozomen (c. 400 – 450 CE) also mentions the same event in his *Ecclesiastical History*.[204] He does not describe the occurrence of the cross as a sign of Constantius' victory but contents himself by stating that it happened when Cyril was the bishop of Jerusalem and was thought to be a fulfillment of a biblical prophecy.

Even more interestingly, Cyril of Jerusalem wrote a letter to Constantius, informing him about the appearance of the cross in the sky and interpreting it in an eschatological framework in his praise of the emperor.[205] In his *Epistle to Constantius*, Cyril addresses the emperor as "most beloved by God and most venerable" (*θεοφιλεστάτος* καὶ *εὐσεβεστάτος*),[206] and interprets

[201] Philostorgius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.16 in Philip R. Amidon (tr.), *Philostorgius: Church History, Writings from the Greco-Roman World 23* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 31-33.
[202] Philostorgius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.2 in Philip R. Amidon (tr.), *Philostorgius: Church History,* 38-39.
[203] Philostorgius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.26 in Philip R. Amidon (tr.), *Philostorgius: Church History,* 58-59.
[204] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.5 in Philip Schaff (ed), *Socrates and Sozomenus Ecclesiastical Histories*, NPNF2-02 (Aeterna Press, 2015), 673.
[205] For the modern edition of Cyril's letter to Constantius, see Ernest Bihain, "L'Épître de Cyrille de Jérusalem à Constance sur la vision de la Croix (BHG^3 413)," *Byzantion* 43 (1973) 264-296.
[206] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Epistle to Constantius*, 1 in Ernest Bihain, "L'Épître de Cyrille de Jérusalem à Constance," 286.

the sign as proof for God's approval of Constantius.[207] Then, he relates this sign as the fulfillment of the eschatological prophecy of the "sign of the Son of Man in heaven" (Mathew 24:30) and urges the emperor to pay attention to the prophecy so that he would "endure no harm from the *hostile force* [italics are mine]."[208] In his recent analysis of the eschatological remarks found in the letter, Mattias Gassman demonstrates how Cyril praises Constantius' knowledge of God (*θεογνωσία*) and puts the sign as proof of both the truth of Christian faith and God's favor of Constantius.[209] Further, Gassman convincingly argues that Cyril, without explicitly describing the "opposing power" which Gassman takes as a reference to the Antichrist, encourages Constantius in his coming war against the usurper Magnentius and exalts Jerusalem, by extension himself too.[210] Cyril's letter follows the examples set by Eusebius in the combined use of panegyric and the Christian Scriptures and remarkably demonstrates how eschatological rhetoric can be employed in praise as well as invective.

On the other hand, Cyril had his own political motivations when writing this letter to the emperor. His elevation to the diocese of Jerusalem between the years 348 and 351 was not without any conflicts. After the death of the Nicene bishop of Jerusalem, Maximus (d. 347 CE), Cyril managed to evict the former's designated successor, a certain Heraclius, with the help of Acacius of Caesarea (d. 366 CE), who would later become the formulator of Homoean Creed finally accepted in the Council of Constantinople in 360. However, Cyril's alliance with Acacius would not last long. His quarrels with Acacius led Cyril to his deposition from his see by a local synod in 357. His status remained unclear as the bishop of Jerusalem. With the help of his new ally, Basil of Ancyra, all the charges against him were dropped at the Council of

[207] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Epistle to Constantius*, 2.11 in Ernest Bihain, "L'Épître de Cyrille de Jérusalem à Constance," 287: "[…] τὴν σὴν βασιλείαν ἀγαπᾶσθαι πρὸς θεοῦ, δι' ὧν ἐπὶ σοῦ θαυματουργεῖ […]"
[208] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Epistle to Constantius*, 6.38 in Ernest Bihain, "L'Épître de Cyrille de Jérusalem à Constance," 290: "[…] πρὸς τὸ μηδεμίαν ἐξ ἀντικειμένης ἐνεργείας ὑπομεῖναι τὴν βλάβην."
[209] Mattias Gassman, "Eschatology and Politics in Cyril of Jerusalem's Epistle to Constantius," 125-130.
[210] Mattias Gassman, "Eschatology and Politics in Cyril of Jerusalem's Epistle to Constantius," *Vigilae Christianae* 70 (2016), 132.

Seleucia in 359, even though the Council of Constantinople in 360, led by Acacius, affirmed his deposition. Only after his public adherence to the Nicene Creed at the council of Constantinople in 381 was Cyril formally restored to his see as the bishop of Jerusalem.[211] By showing his loyalty to Constantius II in his panegyrical letter, Cyril hoped to secure the emperor's favor by solidifying his position as the bishop of Jerusalem. This is not to judge the bishop of insincerity but rather to emphasize the use of eschatological rhetoric in responding to current political circumstances. In this sense, the invectives against Constantius written by the Nicene bishops find their contemporary purpose, too.

Athanasius and Hilary's representation of and attitude toward Constantius II in their apologetic writings addressed to the emperor differs drastically, yet unsurprisingly, from the one in their invectives. To begin with Athanasius, in his *Defense before Constantius*, written in the mid 350s,[212] Athanasius answers to the charge of treason made against him, particularly the accusation that he turned the western emperor Constans (c. 323 – 350 CE) against the eastern emperor Constantius II, his brother. In his defense, Athanasius addresses Constantius II as the most religious and pious Augustus and does acknowledge that he has been a Christian for many years.[213] After refuting the four charges, Athanasius calls upon Constantius not to follow the examples of Saul, Jezebel, and Ahab but those of David and Solomon.[214] In the end, Athanasius eventually does not succeed in changing Constantius' policy against him and finds himself running away from yet another exile in 356. Later, in 357, when he was hiding in Upper Egypt,

[211] For more details on Cyril's career, see Peter van Nuffelen, "The Career of Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 348 – 87): A Reassessment, *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Vol. 58, Pt 1, April 2007, 134-146.
[212] The genesis of *Apologia ad Constantium* has been controversial in the scholarship, as its composition involved other stages of revision. For its initial composition (1-26), Barnes offers the date of spring of 353, while Gwynn suggest that the first part (1-21) was composed in early 357. For more details, see Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 196-197; also see David M. Gwynn, *The Eusebians*, 37-39.
[213] For some examples, see Athanasius of Alexandria, *Defense before Constantius*, 1, 2, 10, etc.
[214] Athanasius of Alexandria, *Defense before Constantius*, 20.

he wrote the *History of the Arians*, denying the name Christian for the emperor, calling him a "new Ahab," even the "precursor to the Antichrist."

In his *To the Emperor Constantius,* written in January 360 just before the Council of Constantinople, Hilary presents himself as an exiled bishop "in communion with all the churches and bishops of the Gauls" and adds, "Yet I am exiled not by an offence, but by a faction and by a synod's false messengers to you, devout Emperor […]"[215] Just as Athanasius, he calls Constantius "most courteous Emperor," and "best and most religious Emperor."[216] Later, Hilary complains about the confusion that the last four different creeds caused and calls for a return to the Nicene Creed, in his words, "synod of our forebears:" the so-called "blasphemy of Sirmium" in 357 makes no mention of *homoousios*, the declaration of the Catholics at Rimini proclaims *homoousios* in 359, the Creed of Nike in 360 absolves the use of *ousios*, and finally, the Creed of Constantinople in 360 condemns its use.[217] Following this, he urges the emperor, "How I admire you, lord Constantius, as a man of blessed and religious will who yearns for a creed only according to the scriptures! Very rightly do you haste towards those utterances of the Only-begotten God so that the breast holding an emperor's cares may be full with the awareness of divine words." Nevertheless, if Constantius does not act accordingly as a Christian, Hilary remarks, "He who rejects this is anti-Christ, he who feigns it is anathema."[218] Like Athanasius, Hilary fails to secure an audience with Constantius and to change his mind. Only after this point does Hilary end up writing his *Against Constantius* and calling him the Antichrist himself. Such stark contrast between their attitude toward the emperor and representation of his Christianity does not necessarily need to be seen as insincerity or hypocrisy

[215] Hilary of Poitiers, *To the Emperor Constantius*, 2 in Lionel R. Wickham (tr), *Hilary of Poitiers: Conflicts of Conscience and Law in the Fourth-Century Church*, 104.
[216] Hilary of Poitiers, *To the Emperor Constantius*, 3, 4 in Lionel R. Wickham (tr), *Hilary of Poitiers: Conflicts of Conscience and Law in the Fourth-Century Church*, 105.
[217] Hilary of Poitiers, *To the Emperor Constantius*, 5-7 in Lionel R. Wickham (tr), *Hilary of Poitiers: Conflicts of Conscience and Law in the Fourth-Century Church*, 106-107.
[218] Hilary of Poitiers, *To the Emperor Constantius*, 8 in Lionel R. Wickham (tr), *Hilary of Poitiers: Conflicts of Conscience and Law in the Fourth-Century Church*, 108.

on the part of these Alexandrian and Gallic bishops. Their endeavor to lobby and persuade the emperor ultimately failed, and they found the Nicene faction they adhered to marginalized from the mainstream ecclesiastical policies in the late 350s and early 360. When they stopped appealing and instead decided to challenge the emperor directly, they used the traditional rhetorical conventions of the invective discourse with a distinct Christian vocabulary.

Despite some differences in their invectives, such as the different presentations of Constantine I, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer, they seem to respond to certain common themes and discourses surrounding Constantius II. In the *History of the Arians*, Athanasius accuses the "Arians" of not having faith in Christ but in the emperor instead when he says, "those who follow the beliefs of Arius truly have no king but Caesar," then adds, "With his help, the enemies of Christ do whatever they want."[219] Athanasius not only attacks the "Arians" for their impulsive and assertive behavior with imperial backing but also Constantius for abusing his imperial power in church affairs. When the western bishops Paulinus, Lucifer, Eusebius, and Dionysius did not agree to subscribe against Athanasius, Athanasius puts the following words in Constantius' mouth: "When they were amazed at this novel practice and said that it was not an ecclesiastical canon, he immediately replied: 'Whatever I want, let that be deemed a canon. The so-called bishops of Syria allow me to speak in this way. Either obey or be exiled.'"[220] Such a statement should be approached with caution and not be taken at its face value, as it is the invention of Athanasius himself put into his highly polemical work rather than the emperor's own words.[221] However, whatever the situation might have been, it is not unlikely that the

[219] Athanasius of Alexandria, History of the Arians, 33.5-6 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 67.
[220] Athanasius of Alexandria, History of the Arians, 33.7 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 67.
[221] Barnes provides a long list of scholarship that took Constantius' "*dictum*" as a historically accurate representation of the relations between the emperor and the church. See Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 279 ft. 33.

Nicene Christians viewed Constantius' non-Nicene decisions in ecclesiastical matters as the enforcement of his "imperial will."

Even more, in *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, Lucifer mentions that the "Arian" bishops call the emperor in the following way, "you whom the bishops of your Arian dogma frequently acclaim as bishop of bishops [*episcopus episcoporum*]."[222] Some historians took this title as an accurate representation of how the "Arians" might have praised their imperial patron.[223] Some others are more cautious about this.[224] According to Girardet, pre-Constantian usage of the term is attested only in the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian, who used the same phrase with negative connotations in their polemics against others.[225] However, as Girardet notes, the idea resembles the Eusebian Christian rulership, which depicted Constantine I himself, as shown above, as a bishop or even a "universal bishop." Even though this specific title was not used by Constantius himself or his "Arian" bishops, Lucifer's attribution of the term to the emperor is to negate Constantius' involvement in ecclesiastical matters. Still, it is not a novelty that a Roman emperor would have a say in religious affairs even before the so-called "Constantinian turn." Since the reign of Augustus (63 BCE – 14 CE), the Roman emperors had the office of *pontifex maximus* and were styled as the chief high priest.[226] According to Zosimus, the emperors used this very same title, even Constantine,

[222] Lucifer of Cagliari, *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, 13 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 178.
[223] For instance, see Francis Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1966), 743. For more studies, see Richard Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*, 21 ft. 70.
[224] For example, see Klaus M. Girardet, "Kaiser Konstantius II. als "Episcopus Episcoporum" und das Herrscherbild des kirchlichen Widerstandes (Ossius von Corduba und Lucifer von Calaris)" *Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Bd. 26, H. 1 (1st Qtr., 1977), pp. 95-128; Charles Pietri, "La politique de Constance II: un premier 'césaropapisme' ou l'imitatio constantini?" in *L'Église et l'Empire au IVe siècle, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique de la Fondation Hardt* (Vandoeuvres-Genève, 1989), 113-178.
[225] Klaus M. Girardet, "Kaiser Konstantius II. als "Episcopus Episcoporum,"" 97-99.
[226] According to Alan Cameron, the title *pontifex maximus* was replaced by that of *pontifext inclitus* in the fifth century. For more details, see Alan Cameron, "The Imperial Pontifex," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 2007, Vol. 103 (2007), 341-384.

Valentinian (321 – 375 CE), and Valens (328 – 378 CE), until Gratian (359 – 383 CE).[227] Therefore, it is not out of the question that Constantius saw himself the right to get involved in the ecclesiastical affairs, and the "Arian" bishops would have no objection to this, even if they did not use the title "bishop of bishops."

It is indeed true that Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer do not recognize Constantius' imperial authority in ecclesiastical affairs in their invectives, as already shown in the previous chapter. It is hardly surprising to observe this, considering the emperor's denomination did not align with theirs. However, I find it necessary to note that their objection to the alignment between the imperial and ecclesiastical spheres is due to the emperor's non-Nicene, allegedly "unorthodox" policies. None of the three Nicene bishops under scrutiny would have any disapproval of the emperor's active participation in the church matters had Constantius embraced the "Nicene Orthodoxy." As Brandes reminds, Athanasius does not have anything against to say when all the previously exiled bishops, himself included, were recalled by the now-ruling three sons of Constantine after the latter died in 337, even though this was not "canonical."[228] Also, in his examination of the association of the iconoclastic emperors, like Leo III (685 – 741 CE) and Constantine V (714 – 775 CE), with the Antichrist by iconophile figures, Dagron concludes that "It was very obviously the Constantinian project that was under attack."[229] Dagron demonstrates this with the revived memory of the "Arian Constantine" by Maximus the Confessor (580 – 662 CE) and later by George Hamartolus, or George the Monk, in the ninth century. This is not observable in the "Arian" controversy of the fourth century. In the apologetic writings of Athanasius and Hilary discussed above, it appears that what was at

[227] Zosimus, *New History*, 4.36 in Ronald T. Ridley (tr. and comm.), *Zosimus: New History*, Byzantina Australiensia 2 (Australian Association for Byzantine Studies: 1982), 87.
[228] Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 132. Also see, Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 8.1 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 46.
[229] Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, (tr.) Jean Birrell (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press), 190; for his detailed analysis, see especially the pages 127-157.

stake was not the emperor's personal involvement in the ecclesiastical dispute but the side he was taking. In their invectives, on the other hand, Athanasius and Hilary constructed an "Orthodox Constantine" as a positive *exemplum* to be followed by Constantius, the failure of which resulted in the condemnation of Constantius as a heretic persecutor in the likeness of the Antichrist.

These invectives do demonstrate, however, the failure of the Eusebian-Constantinian imperial ideal in establishing ecclesiastical "peace and unity" across the Roman Empire from the time of the Council of Nicaea in 325 until the Council of Constantinople in 360. I argue that the discourse of "peace and unity" might as well have been a shared concern and even perhaps a part of the Constantian propaganda in implementing the emperor's non-Nicene ecclesiastical policies. In their invectives, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer jointly hint at this. To illustrate, at the beginning of his *Against Constantius*, Hilary excuses himself for staying silent for so long, yet he notes that he already withdrew from communion with leading "Arians," namely Saturninus of Arles, Ursacius of Singidunum, and Valens of Mursa. Then, he explains the reason why he did not do the same with other "Arian" colleagues: "so that the option of peace might still exist."[230] Later in his invective, in chapter five, he uses somewhat paradoxical language to depict what he calls Constantius the Antichrist as a "deceptive persecutor" and "flattering enemy." Hilary reveals what Constantius allegedly says but actually does, "he [Constantius] *confesses Christ* so that he might deny him, he *promotes unity* to prevent peace, he *suppresses heresies* to eliminate Christians, he *rewards priests* to preclude bishops, he *constructs buildings for the Church* [all the italics are mine] to demolish its faith."[231] Such

[230] Hilary of Poitiers, Against Constantius, 2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 116-117.
[231] Hilary of Poitiers, Against Constantius, 5 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 119-120.

statements do not need to be taken literally, but Hilary's exhortations may as well be seen as a distorted presentation of how Constantius promoted his ecclesiastical policies.

In the *History of the Arians*, Athanasius relates the combined imperial and "Arian" pressure put onto Liberius, bishop of Rome, to condemn Athanasius. Then, Athanasius puts the following words into Liberius' mouth, "This is not an ecclesiastical canon, nor is this the tradition we have from the Fathers […] *If the emperor really cares about ecclesiastical peace* [italics are mine]."[232] Here, Athanasius clearly presents the actions made against himself by his "Arian" and imperial opponents as disturbing factors of ecclesiastical peace. On the other hand, Athanasius displays his return to Alexandria in 346 after he was recalled from exile by the emperor Constantius as prevailing "peace" among all churches and congregations. He presents his return to Alexandria as the bringer of peace, saying, "Who was not astonished when they witnessed this and the great peace in the churches? Who did not rejoice when they saw the unanimity of so many bishops? Who did not praise the Lord when they beheld the happiness of the congregations in the assemblies?"[233] He contrasts the images of the imperially backed "Arians" and himself as the disrupter and restorer of peace.

Lucifer also remarks similarly on peace and unity in *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*. After mentioning the title "bishop of bishops," he asks, "Why do you not stop persecuting his [Son of God] believers? Why do you not leave them in peace? Why are you always restless and always hostile towards us, showing yourself to be a violent persecutor, a treacherous enemy, but *under the name of peace* [italics are mine]?"[234] All these instances imply, however indirectly, that there might have been "Arian" and/or imperial discourses of

[232] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 36.1-2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 69. Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 25.5, 27.1, 28.2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 60, 62.
[233] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 27.1, 25.5, 28.2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 60, 62.
[234] Lucifer of Cagliari, *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God, 13* in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 178.

"peace" and "unity" in justifying the imperial ecclesiastical policies. Consequently, it is not unlikely that Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer may have written these invectives as counter-narratives. With the common themes of martyrdom and persecution in their writings, often accompanied by villainous biblical typologies, such as the Antichrist, the invectives against Constantius II unitedly present the contemporary tumultuous ecclesiastical politics as a period of "persecution of the faithful." This is most expressed by Athanasius when he proclaims, "*Who still dares to say that the present time is peaceful for Christians and not rather a persecution* [italics are mine]? And it is a persecution the like of which has never occurred before and will probably never be perpetrated by anyone else, except the son of lawlessness [another name for the Antichrist], who is already revealed by the enemies of Christ, who create an image of him in themselves."[235]

III.4. Other *Antichristi*: Constans and Julian

The invectives of Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer were exceptional cases when such an extreme rhetorical attack was conducted against a still living Christian emperor, but not the only isolated instance where the rhetoric of eschatology was employed in the fourth century. First is the Donatist controversy in the north Africa. Despite the initial appeal of the Donatists to the imperial authority and the ensuing correspondence between the two, negotiations did not come to a resolution.[236] Famously, Donatus (d. c. 355 CE) cried out, "What has the emperor to do with the Church?"[237] In the 340s, the western emperor Constans started a campaign for violent suppression of the schismatic Donatists in North Africa, causing many Donatist

[235] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 77.2 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 107.
[236] Noel Lenski provides a legal history of the Donatist controversy from Constantine down to Honorius with a particular focus on the role of rhetoric in legal procedure negotiating a sectarian controversy; see Noel Lenski, "Imperial Legislation and the Donatist Controversy: From Constantine to Honorius," in (ed) Richard Miles, *The Donatist Schism: Controversy and Contexts* (Liverpool University Press, 2016), 166-219.
[237] Optatus, *Contra Parmenianum Donatistam*, 3.3 in CSEL 26.73: "Quid est imperatori cum ecclesia?"

martyrographies.[238] One of them, which is particularly relevant for the present discussion, is the *Passion of Marculus,* in which the martyrdom of Marculus of Thamugadi (d. 357 CE) by the Roman officials is narrated. There, the so-called Macarian persecution is told to be ordered from the "tyrannical home of King Constans."[239] According to the story, Constans himself sent his two representatives, Macarius and Paul, to Africa, who are called the two beasts, alluding to the two beasts of the *Revelation*. In the next chapter, the emperor Constans is called the "precursor to the Antichrist."[240] This is, of course, quite the opposite of Nicene portrayals of the same emperor whose patronage Athanasius enjoyed. In a letter written by the Nicene bishop of Cordoba to Constantius II, quoted at length by Athanasius, Ossius advises the emperor not to use violence, intervene in the affairs of the Church and urges him to follow the example of his brother Constans.[241]

Another example is the orations written by Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306 – 379 CE) against the so-called "apostate" emperor Julian. After the death of Constantius II in 361, the emperor Julian became the sole emperor and attempted the provocative restoration of the traditional Graeco-Roman cults as the official religion of the empire. His reign, however, was short-lived. During his military campaign against the Sassanid Empire in 363, he died. When his body was brought back to Nisibis, a city that was to be handed over to the Sassanid Persians after the peace treaty made by the next emperor, Jovian (331 – 364 CE), Ephrem delivered four hymns *Against Julian*. In his study on Syriac political theology in Late Antiquity, Manolis Papoutsakis argues that Ephrem implicitly portrayed Julian as the "Antichrist-figure par excellence," as an

[238] For the use of eschatological rhetoric in the Donatist writings, see Jesse Hoover, T*he Donatist Church in an Apocalyptic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[239] *The Martyrdom of Marculus*, 3 in Maureen A. Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories: The Church in Conflict in Roman North Africa* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), 79.
[240] *The Martyrdom of Marculus*, 4 in Maureen A. Tilley, *Donatist Martyr Stories*, 80.
[241] Athanasius of Alexandria, *History of the Arians*, 44.6 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 77. Even though the authenticity of the letter is disputed, it is safe to say that Athanasius' perception of Constans is in similar terms as expressed in this letter. For the details on this discussion, see Richard Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective*, 155 ft. 123.

"offspring of Typhon" and disrupting the "continuous line of the Davidic Constantinian rulers.[242] Equally interesting is Ephrem's presentation of Constantius. In his second hymn, *Against Julian*, for instance, Ephrem says:

> The wolf borrowed the clothing of the True Lamb;
> The innocent sheep sniffed at him without recognizing him,
> For he had greatly deceived that shepherd who died.[243]

According to the interpretation of Philip Michael Forness, the "wolf" is Julian for disguising his true pagan identity, and the "innocent sheep" refers to the Christians who took Julian for a Christian, while the "shepherd" is Constantius II.[244] Forness convincingly argues that Ephrem, as an adherent bishop of the Nicene Creed, glosses over the non-Nicene character of Constantius and stresses the protection that a Christian ruler, though a heretical one, could provide for his congregation to survive.[245] Forness encourages the interpretation that these texts offer a brief window to the authors' reflections on contemporary circumstances rather than a fully-fledged political thought.[246]

[242] Manolis Papoutsakis, *Vicarious Kingship: A Theme in Syriac Political Theology in Late Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), especially see, 119-138.
[243] Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns Against Julian*, 2.1 in Kathleen E. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (New York Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), 234. The references to the "wolf in sheep's clothing" (from Mathew 7:15, also associated with false prophets) are also found in the invectives written against Constantius II. See Hilary of Poitiers, *Against Constantius*, 10; Lucifer of Cagliari, *The Necessity of Dying for the Son of God*, 5, 11 in Richard Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II*, 125, 157, 172.
[244] Philip Michael Forness, "Faithful Rulers and Theological Deviance: Ephrem the Syrian and Jacob of Serugh on the Roman Emperor," in Philip Michael Forness, Alexandra Hasse-Ungeheuer, Harmut Leppin (eds), *The Good Christian Ruler in the First Millennium: Views from the Wider Mediterranean World in Conversation* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 149.
[245] Philip Michael Forness, "Faithful Rulers and Theological Deviance," especially see, 145-156.
[246] For instance, Sidney H. Griffith takes Ephrem's *Hymns Against Julian* as reflective of his political thought, which he finds in similar terms to the Eusebian view of Church and State. Volker Menze disagrees with this interpretation and argues that Ephrem's ecclesiology was different from that of Eusebius. See, Sidney H. Griffith, "Ephraem the Syrian's Hymns 'Against Julian:' Meditations on History and Imperial Power," *Vigilae Christianae* 41 (1987), 238-266; also, Volker Menze, "The Imperial Office and the Church in Ephrem the Syrian," in Elizabeth Frood, Rubina Raja (eds), *Redefining the Sacred: Religious Architecture and Text in the Near East and Egypt 1000 BC-Ad 300* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 231-253.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter puts the Antichrist typology of the invectives against Constantius in dialogue with the larger eschatological rhetoric found in other literary discourses. I argue that Eusebius' praise of the Roman Empire as the earthly reflection of the heavenly kingdom of God or his laudation of Constantine as a "new Moses" and "universal bishop" was far from being the only prevailing interpretation. As a result of changing historical circumstances, creative rhetorical responses were employed with respect to polemical targets of different Christian groups. Against Constantius' non-Nicene ecclesiastical policies, the Nicene bishops, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer, denounced a still-living Christian Roman Emperor as the Antichrist. However, their condemnation of Constantius' involvement in ecclesiastical affairs does not mean a break away from the "imperial Church." Instead, they contested it by putting Nicene Orthodoxy as a necessity and a new standard against which the emperor and bishops were to be assessed. For the three Nicene bishops, Constantius' attempts establish a *homoian* "Orthodoxy," other than the Nicene one, were not a policy of establishing peace and unity in the Church but actually the very "persecution" of it.

The very same emperor, whom Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer viewed and presented as in the likeness of or even as the Antichrist himself, was also praised for God's approval of him and his knowledge of God by Cyril of Jerusalem. Even further, Cyril viewed Constantius as fulfilling the eschatological prophecy not of the Antichrist but of the son of man. Also, the emperor Constans, held in high esteem by Athanasius for the former's protection over the latter, was called the precursor to the Antichrist in one of the many Donatist martyrdom accounts because of the emperor's violent suppression of the Donatists. Moreover, Julian was portrayed as yet another eschatological persecutor of the faithful due to his efforts to revive the traditional "pagan" cults. Against Julian's example, Ephrem the Syrian praised Constantius, whose "heretical" memory was left out. The usage of eschatological rhetoric indeed does indicate the

deliberate positioning of the polemical target in the Christian perception of the teleological "History." Nevertheless, such a variety and almost totally different portrayals of the same figures reveal more about the insecurities and anxieties of different Christian groups in response to changing historical circumstances.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, the thesis discusses the association of the Roman emperor Constantius II with the figure of the Antichrist in the invectives written by the Nicene bishops Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers, and Lucifer of Cagliari against the emperor's non-Nicene ecclesiastical policies. Firstly, I explore the authoritative source for such an accusation in the biblical and exegetical pre-Constantinian Christian literature. I argue that the Antichrist, as an antithetical figure of Christ, was imagined to be the eschatological adversary against God's people in the teleological understanding of the Christian "History of Salvation." This found expression in two lines of thought according to the respective polemical targets: an internal threat, often in the form of schismatic heretic, dividing the community of the faithful, or an external one, as a foreign tyrant persecuting the believers. My conclusion is that under new post-Constantinian historical circumstances, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer came up with a relatively "creative" solution. In their polemic against a Christian Roman Emperor, whose non-Nicene denomination did not align with their own adherence to the Nicene Creed, the two distinct interpretive traditions merged when Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer called Constantius II the Antichrist, a heretical persecutor of the "Orthodox" Christians.

Secondly, I investigate how the Antichrist typology is employed against the person of Constantius and his ecclesiastical policies in the invectives of the three Nicene bishops and what it indicates in the framework of the making of "Orthodoxy" in the mid-fourth century church politics. I claim that these invectives are no "empty rhetoric." They present the "Arian heretics" as antichrists following their imperial patron, Constantius the Antichrist. Drawing on biblical parallelisms with contemporary ecclesiastical policies, the Antichrist typology is employed in the criticism of the emperor's policy of handing over the Nicene churches to the "Arians," sending Nicene bishops into exile, and finally, imperial involvement in church affairs.

Such a careful framing of their polemical targets as the "enemy of God," Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer display the contemporary policies of the non-Nicene "imperial Church" as actively fulfilling the eschatological prophecies by persecuting God's people, the orthodox Nicene Christians. It is also not unlikely that such themes of persecution and martyrdom, as well as the Antichrist typology, played a role in the reception and circulation of these texts.

Lastly, I address the significance and implications of calling a still-living Christian Roman emperor the Antichrist after the so-called "Constantinian turn." I assert that the Eusebian view of the empire and its emperor(s), labeled as the "imperial eschatology" in the secondary literature, was far from being the only interpretation widely accepted by every Christian within the Roman Empire across the Mediterranean basin. I stress the rhetorical conventions of the eschatological remarks and the responses to the changing historical circumstances in which different literary discourses were used for their specific target audience. At the very beginning of the fourth century, Christianity was a persecuted religion. Constantine first turned it into a tolerated one with the Edict of Milan in 313 and its Church into an imperial one in 325. It is under these circumstances the Roman Empire came to represent the earthly mimesis of God's Heavenly Kingdom in Eusebius' *Tricennial Oration*, and his emperor Constantine I a "new Moses" and a "universal bishop." During Constantius II's search for a non-Nicene "Orthodoxy," when the Nicene bishops became increasingly alienated from the arena of ecclesiastical politics toward the year 360, Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer contested the "imperial Church" and called Constantius the Antichrist. As I argue above, their depiction of Constantius' reign in the likeness of Antichrist's prophesized persecution of the faithful was a competing discourse against the imperial discourse of "unity and peace."

Nevertheless, I do not suggest an exclusively anti-Constantian employment of the eschatological rhetoric. Cyril of Jerusalem's praise of Constantius II for God's approval of him, alongside the interpretation of fulfillment of the biblical prophecy of the son of man due to the

appearance of the sign of the cross at Jerusalem, clearly demonstrates the variety of possibilities where eschatological rhetoric could be used on the same person by different Christian bishops. This is also most apparent in Nicene bishop Ephrem the Syrian's post-mortem praise of Constantius II as a good exemplum in Ephrem's invective against the so-called apostate emperor Julian. A further example is the denunciation of emperor Constans as the precursor to the Antichrist in one of the Donatist martyrdom accounts for being held responsible for the persecution of yet another Christian group, the schismatic Donatists. After all, these different appearances of eschatological rhetoric in various literary genres, panegyric, invective, martyrology, etc., do reveal the anxieties and insecurities of different Christian groups about their status within the Roman Empire and its emperors. Acknowledging the plurality of differing views, I believe, contributes to understanding the complexity of the Constantinian Empire. With this study, I do hope to open the ground for further discussion of the use of eschatological rhetoric in the broader world of Late Antiquity and beyond.

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