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## Antichrist in the Shadows: Biblical Allusion in *Richard III* and *Macbeth*

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Graduate Program in English  
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## Abstract

The tyrant kings in Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Macbeth* have been associated by scholars with pre-existing dramatic types such as the devil, the Vice, the Machiavel, as well as with biblical prototypes such as Saul, King Herod, and Judas. This thesis argues that Richard and Macbeth reflect all of these characteristics, but are best typified as *figuras* of the biblical Antichrist. The evidence, I argue, is situated in concrete biblical allusions diffused throughout the texts by Shakespeare, allusions that have been identified by scholars. I begin by identifying three primary signposts by which the figure of Antichrist was identified in both the Middle Ages and the early modern era: kingship, deception, and finally, the defilement of God's Temple. Both chapters discuss the association of witchcraft with the advent of Antichrist.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Antichrist, Satan, *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *figura*, Naseeb Shaheen, Richard Kenneth Emmerson, usurper, king, tyrant, deceiver, Abomination of Desolation, witchcraft, apostasy, apparent good, true good, medieval, Reformation.

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## Chapter 1

### 1 Antichrist in the Shadows: Biblical Allusion in *Richard III* and *Macbeth*

Literature in early modern England, reflecting the social, political and religious milieu, necessarily addressed an interest in apocalyptic perspectives that had persisted from the Middle Ages, and intensified in the ferment of the Reformation and Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> The Elizabethan and Jacobean eras saw the production of sophisticated dramas, especially in the urbane environment of London, where plays such as Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, Middleton's *The Witch*, Rowley, Dekker and Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton*, Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass*, and *Masque of Queens*, and Heywood and Brome's *The Witches of Lancashire*, evinced an abiding concern with the nature of evil, especially in its supernatural manifestation. Shakespeare, too, interested in the nature of moral evil, presents the idea of human villainy in its many incarnations, but most fascinating of all in its quintessence—Antichrist.

Scholars have identified the Vice figure<sup>2</sup> from the morality plays, as well as the Machiavellian<sup>3</sup> as influences on Shakespeare's dramatic portrait of villainy in *Richard III* and *Macbeth*; and

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan L. Pearl in the introduction to Bodin's *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* illuminates the 16<sup>th</sup> Century atmosphere of apocalyptic anticipation: "The sense of the presence of the Devil and the power of evil in the world was heightened by the coming of the Reformation in the early sixteenth century. . . Ideas of the imminence of the Apocalypse—the end of the world—with evil rampant and the Antichrist stalking the earth became very prevalent as the century went on" (16-17).

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Spivack contends that Shakespeare's Richard III is a generalized type of the Vice: "To moralize two meanings in one word is, as we saw, a commonplace in the Vice's repertory of deceit, and Richard does not refer to any one version of the Vice. He refers rather to the composite role, for which *Iniquity*, a moral designation equally composite, became the common name after precise homiletic distinction between one Vice and another dissolved into the generalized figure who became a fixture of the stage" (394-395).

<sup>3</sup> W.A. Armstrong is an advocate of the Richard-as-Machiavellian interpretation: "Shakespeare's *Richard III* provides adequate illustration of how powerfully Machiavellian literature influenced the political tactics of the stage tyrant. . . Richard does not use poison, but with the exception of this technique of assassination he exhibits all the notorious characteristics of the Machiavellian tyrant" (28). Campbell argues that Richard was early on viewed as a Machiavellian, prior to the Anti-Machiavellian publication of Innocent Gentillet, the French Huguenot exile: "The specific and detailed comparison between Richard III and the members of Elizabeth's council prove that Richard was accepted as a Machiavellian before Gentillet's work was published, and that he continued to be associated with Machiavellianism." (332-333).

allusions to the devil<sup>4</sup> punctuate both plays. This thesis, however, will argue that Shakespeare enlists biblical allusion in *Richard III* and *Macbeth* to represent the Christian conception of human evil, the scriptural apogee of which is the prophesied end-time Antichrist.<sup>5</sup> The allusions that I will consider in this thesis identify both Richard and Macbeth as literary *figuras* of Antichrist. Such a contention is not without some critical precedence, as in W.A. Armstrong's view that there is a connection between Richard and Macbeth as "Machiavels," what he denominates as "stage tyrants," and the figure of Antichrist.<sup>6</sup> Anne Lecercle, as well, argues for a correspondence between the "little horn" of Revelation, in other words Antichrist,<sup>7</sup> and Richard.

In accordance with Roland Mushat Frye's contention that Shakespeare employed doctrine, not to theologize, but to dramatize character, this thesis will consider how the biblical allusions pertaining to Antichrist in *Richard III* and *Macbeth* augment the dramatization of both villain-kings. I will argue that such biblical allusions not only contain doctrine implicitly, but they serve to deepen the dramatic content of the plays by rooting the characters in the larger theological drama of Scripture. The contention here is not dissimilar to Peter Milward's insight in *Biblical Influences in Shakespeare's Great Tragedies* that the Bible "is by no means exclusively religious in its interest. . . while looking to God in heaven, it does not overlook the situation of men on earth, but if anything, it amplifies their suffering and their joy and so offers an abundance of ideas and images to a dramatist like Shakespeare" (xi).

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<sup>4</sup> Armstrong also sees a strong association between Shakespeare's tyrant kings and the devil: "Elizabethan moralists often summarize the tyrant as an epitome of deadly sins and compare his pride, ambition, and malice to those of Satan himself. A corresponding diabolical vein runs through the imagery of *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, where the tyrants, in metaphor and simile, are stigmatized as devils" (19).

<sup>5</sup> Relevant to this thesis, Armstrong sees a connection between the Machiavel and Antichrist: "The Machiavellianism of the stage tyrant was yet another characteristic which associated him with the forces of Antichrist" (32).

<sup>6</sup> Armstrong contends that both *Richard III* and *Macbeth* are tyrant-tragedies influenced by Seneca and Machiavelli, but based primarily on the Christian reaction to tyranny; and so, he sees a "corresponding diabolical vein" in the "imagery of Richard III and Macbeth, where the tyrants, in metaphor and simile, are stigmatized as devils" (19). But even more significant for this thesis is Armstrong's association of Machiavelli with Antichrist: "The Machiavellianism of the stage tyrant was yet another characteristic which associated him with the forces of Antichrist" (32). It is an indirect association, but nevertheless, the connection between Richard III and Macbeth with Antichrist has been noted by scholars.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Kenneth Emerson explains that "the little horn of Daniel 7:7-8 has been widely understood as a symbol of Antichrist, either directly or by comparison with Antiochus Epiphanes, a historical type of Antichrist" (21).

## 1.1 Medieval versus Reformation view of Antichrist

Shakespeare's approach, as this thesis argues, is more consonant with the traditional, medieval view of Antichrist<sup>8</sup> as both an end-time tyrant-king and a deceiver,<sup>9</sup> as opposed to the Reformation view of Antichrist as primarily a religious deceiver<sup>10</sup> who claims to be the vicar of Christ, occupying a papal throne.<sup>11</sup> Although the latter perspective grew out of the medieval tradition of the great deceiver, the predominant Reformation interpretation of Antichrist nevertheless differs radically by positing a religious figure instead of a king. Not a few scholars, such as Alfred Thomas and Kurt A. Schreyer, argue that Shakespeare drew upon a knowledge of medieval drama, specifically the late medieval mystery plays, of which they conjecture he may have had first-hand knowledge, to not only construct the material of his own plays (Schreyer 3), but also to comment, like the authors of the mystery plays, on the "political corruption" (Thomas 192) of his own time.

The distinction between the two views of Antichrist, then, rests primarily upon the emphasis on identity. As previously indicated, the medieval portrayal of Antichrist refers to a single individual, specifically a tyrannical king, who arises on the world stage at the end of time. He comes as a result of what Paul, in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, calls "a departing,"<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The medieval view of Antichrist, according to Emerson, has its roots in Scripture: "The Bible thus served as the chief source for the numerous details that the Middle Ages associated with Antichrist's appearance in the last days" (46).

<sup>9</sup> The medieval portrayal of Antichrist is two-fold, according to Emerson: "medieval exegetes described two apparently contradictory natures of Antichrist. Depending upon the exegete's source and purpose, he described Antichrist sometimes as a ruthless tyrant who will persecute Christians and other times as a hypocrite who deceives the righteous by pretending to be Christ" (74).

<sup>10</sup> Hamlin points out that "William Fulke, in his *Praelections upon the sacred and holy Revelation of St. John* . . . interpreted Revelation, as did many Elizabethan Protestants, as a prophetic vision of the wickedness of the Pope and the Catholic Church. (220).

<sup>11</sup> Emerson argues that the Protestant view of Antichrist represents a radical departure from the medieval view: "In contrast, the Protestant identification of Antichrist with the papacy and Catholicism in general is much more revolutionary. It represents a change in doctrine in which not merely some specific papal problem, but the papacy itself, is repudiated . . . The Protestant interpretation of Antichrist, in other words, represents a change from damning an individual (a specific pope), who for particular reasons is like Antichrist, to condemning an institution (the papacy), which in its false doctrine teaches Antichrist's deceit" (206-207).

<sup>12</sup> 2 Thess. 2:3: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a departing first, and that that man of sin be disclosed, even the son of perdition" (Geneva 96). The Geneva Bible annotation, c, to this passage interprets the departing to be "a wonderful departing for the moste parte from the faith" (Geneva 96).

or an apostasy,<sup>13</sup> a general defection from the Christian faith.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the Protestant portrayal of Antichrist that prevailed during the early modern era centered on the papacy.<sup>15</sup> Both interpretations include the central characteristic of deception, but diverge radically in that the more contemporary view of the Reformers excludes the singularity of a tyrannical king at the end of world history, a condition for identification integral to the medieval exegesis. In addition to identifying the papacy with Antichrist, reformers often referred to the Catholic Church itself as the whore of Babylon.<sup>16</sup> Anxiety about the imminence of the apocalypse reached something of a crescendo in the early modern era. According to Bernard McGinn, Antichrist bordered on an obsession for Reformation England:

The Antichrist legend played a large role in the English Reformation from its beginnings. One of the earliest English reformers, William Tyndale (c. 1494-1536), the Bible translator, held a general spiritual view of Antichrist, one that included the papacy, but only as part of the growing force of evil throughout history. But Luther's identification of

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<sup>13</sup> *The Rheims New Testament of 1580* uses the word "revolt" instead of "departing." The Rheims gloss asserts that Paul's warning is two-fold: "Here he warneth us of two specially, of a revolt, defection or an apostasy, and of the coming or revelation of Antichrist. Which two pertain in effect both to one, either depending of the other, and shall fall (as it may be thought) near together, and therefore St. Augustine maketh them but one thing" (416).

<sup>14</sup> Abandonment or renunciation of one's religious faith or moral allegiance. "apostasy, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2018, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/9399](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/9399). Accessed: 25 January 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Ryan J. Stark argues that apocalyptic fears, specifically concerning the advent of Antichrist in the person of the Catholic Pope, were prevalent in early modern England: "The idea of an impending apocalypse pervaded early Reformation culture, beginning with Luther's identification of Leo X as Antichrist and intensifying with Lucas Cranach and Phillip Melancthon's *Passional Christi und Antichristi* (1521)" (519). Richard Kyle, analyzing the influence of the Protestant John Knox on Apocalyptic thought in early modern England, notes that the Book of Revelation annotations in the Geneva Bible, heavily influenced by John Bale and Henry Bullinger, identified the Catholic Church with the enemy of Christ: "Though avoiding the detailed periodization of some apocalyptic writings, these notes did link specific events and persons with certain passages and clearly identified the antichrist with the papacy" (454). A little later in the same paper, Kyle asserts that Knox's derogation of the papacy as Antichrist was a common feature of Reformation thought: "Such an accusation was widespread in the sixteenth century. In fact, with one united voice the magisterial reformers said that the 'man of sin' was the office of the papacy" (462). Avihu Zakai argues that the Protestant view of history, that biblical prophecy could be discerned in current events, tended to reinforce nationalism, and this is especially so in the case of England during the early modern era: "English history appeared as an endless struggle of the English Church and monarchy to resist Rome's appropriation of regal and ecclesiastical powers. This argument became the core of Protestant historiography, primarily through the writings of John Bale, John Foxe, and Thomas Brightman, the leading exponents of Protestant apocalyptic tradition in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (306-307).

<sup>16</sup> Evidence for this assertion can be found, among many other sources, in the annotations to the Book of Revelation in the 1560 edition of *The Geneva Bible*, elucidating the identity of the "great whore" who sits "upon a skarlat coloured beast," a woman "araied in purple & skarlat, & guilded with golde & precious stones, and pearles" (Rev. 18: 2-4, Geneva 120): "This woman is the Antichrist, that is, the Pope with the whole bodie of his filthie creatures, as is expounded in vers. 18, whose beautie onely standeth in outwarde pompe & impudencie and craft like a strumpet" (annotation "f", Rev. 18:4, Geneva 120).



the papacy as *the* Antichrist soon came to the fore. In 1536, for example, Thomas Cranmer, the episcopal leader of the reformed party, preached a sermon at St. Paul's Cross on the papal Antichrist. The discussion in Elizabethan England soon became so intense that Bishop Jewel (1522-1571) could note, "There is none, neither old nor young, neither learned nor unlearned, but he hath heard of Antichrist" . . . In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries English fascination with the figure of Antichrist, closely connected with efforts to unwrap the meaning of the Apocalypse, built to a crescendo. (218-220)

That Shakespeare would have been unaware of his audience's fascination with Antichrist is unlikely, and that he would have ignored in his dramatic work one of the great obsessions of his age seems even more unlikely.

Whereas certain writers contemporaneous with Shakespeare, such as Marlowe and Dekker, adhered to the Reformation view of Antichrist, as apparent, for example, in the respective dramas *Doctor Faustus* and *The Whore of Babylon*, plays wherein the pope is depicted as inimical to the Christian model of moral goodness, Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Macbeth* evince a stronger association with the medieval view of Antichrist, as previously indicated. The evidence for this assertion can be found in the biblical allusions themselves, allusions that point to many of the characteristic features of Antichrist taken up in the medieval tradition. The sixteenth-century Reformer identifies the office of the Roman Catholic Pope with Antichrist, thereby evoking the sense of an imminent apocalypse; the medieval interpretation, on the other hand, insists on a longer view of history, placing Antichrist at the end of time, although not excluding the possibility of many historical *figuras* preceding the final great tyrant. The latter view is consonant with the biblical perspective:<sup>17</sup> it is only at the end of historical time that the

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<sup>17</sup> The second coming of Christ, which in the New Testament is the end of history, brings the defeat of Antichrist (referred to as the "beast" in Revelation) and the false prophet, and the final judgement of mankind. See Rev. 19-20: "And I sawe the beast, and the Kings of the earth, and their warriors gathered together to make battel against him, that sate on the horse & against his soldiers./But the beast was taken, and with him that false prophete that wrought miracles before him, whereby he deceived them that received the beastes marke, & them that worshiped his image. These both were alive cast into a lake of fyre, burning with brimstone" (Geneva 121). See also, Rev. 20:10-15: "And the devil that deceived them, was cast into a lake of fyre & brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet shalbe tormented even day and night forevermore./And I saw a great white throne, and one that sate on it, from whose face fled away bothe the earth and heaven, & their place was no more founde./And I sawe the dead, bothe great & small stand before God: and the bokes were opened, & another boke was opened, which is the boke of life, and the dead were judged of those things, which were written in the bokes, according to their

Satanic plan to usurp the kingship of God on earth results in ultimate failure. Ultimately, Antichrist, referred to in Revelation as the “beast,” and also his companion in Revelation, the “False Prophet,” are defeated by the return of Christ, and cast—traditional exegetes believe by St. Michael<sup>18</sup>-- into the burning lake of fire, to be damned forever in hell. The Bible reveals some details about the character of the end-time tyrant of the world, but the question as to Antichrist’s identity remains open to interpretation, as exemplified in the religious disputes that seized Europe during the Reformation. At most, one can assert that Antichrist is to be the fullest expression, at the end of the historical epoch, of Satan’s spirit reflected in human form. Just as Jesus Christ, according to Christian exegetes, is the perfect image of God, Antichrist will be the most perfect human image of Satan.<sup>19</sup> In *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, Richard Kenneth Emmerson details the medieval conception of Antichrist as a parody of Christ:

The various creatures of Apocalypse 13 are symbolically brought together again in Apocalypse 16:13: ‘And I saw from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet come three unclean spirits like frogs.’ Medieval commentators interpret the dragon to be Satan, the beast to be Antichrist (the seven-headed beast), the false prophet (the beast from the earth) to be the messengers and disciples of Antichrist. Throughout the commentaries, each creature plays a set role: The dragon/Satan gives power and authority and is worshipped in return; the seven-headed

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works./And the sea gave up her dead, which were in her, and death and hell delivered up the dead, which were in them: & they were judged everie man according to their works./And death and hell were cast into the lake of fyre: this is the seconde death./And whosoever was not found written in the booke of life, was cast into the lake of fyre” (Geneva 121).

<sup>18</sup> Emmerson relates the medieval view of Michael as Christ’s agent of vengeance: “Generally, though, the ‘spirit of Christ’s mouth’ is considered the predetermined agent of Christ who acts with his full consent, and in later explanations, the agent is usually identified as Michael. This interpretation is already suggested by Bede, who states that Antichrist will be killed by either Christ or the power of Christ, even if that power is wielded by Michael. In popular literature, Michael plays a similarly important role as Christ’s agent. The influential *Legenda aurea* explains Michael’s significance as defender of the faithful by noting that he will kill Antichrist, whereas the Chester *Coming of Antichrist* brings Michael on stage to accuse and then kill Antichrist before the devils drag him to hell” (103).

<sup>19</sup> As Christ is the mirror of God, the Father, so Antichrist will reflect Satan, according to the medieval view as detailed by Emmerson: “Such interpretations emphasize Antichrist’s parodic imitation of Christ’s life. As medieval commentators recognized apparent similarities between the events of Christ’s and Antichrist’s lives, they added to the Antichrist legend not originally found in the apocalyptic sources. Explanations of Antichrist’s birth, for example, reflect a conscious effort to portray Antichrist as a parodic antitype of Christ. Antichrist’s mother, according to legend, is possessed by the devil, so that her child will be born thoroughly evil, in contrast to Christ, whose mother was possessed by the Holy Spirit” (75).

beast/Antichrist teaches false doctrine, persecutes the church, and is in turn worshipped by false Christians; the two-horned beast/false prophet leads people to worship the beast from the sea by false preaching and miracles. Although three separate creatures, they represent a unity of evil. . . They also form a trinity of evil in which Satan becomes ‘the god of this world’ (2 Cor. 4:4) and Antichrist the false Christ. The parodic trinity, especially clear in the terminology and actions of each creature, is emphasized in commentaries on the miracles of the two-horned beast/false prophet. Imitating Christ’s sending of the Holy Spirit, he will make fire descend from heaven (Apoc. 13:13) in a parodic Pentecost that is actually an ‘evil spirit’ deceptively resembling the Holy Spirit. The dualism that marks medieval apocalypticism and interpretations of Antichrist led to an identification of an apocalyptic antitrinity. (23-24)

The bond between Satan and Antichrist, therefore, represents a type of infernal counterfeit, or caricature, of God the Father’s relationship to Jesus Christ.<sup>20</sup> The medieval notion of Antichrist, outlined by Emerson, is extant in the Renaissance; and indeed it is readily recognized in the conception articulated in the annotations to the *Rheims New Testament*, published in 1582: “Antichrist is called the beast, to whom the dragon, that is, the Devil giveth that power of feigned miracles. And as we adore God for giving power to Christ and his followers, so they shall adore the Devil for assisting Antichrist and giving him power” (551-552). A little further on in the annotations, the gloss on Apoc. 13:18 states plainly that Antichrist must be a singular man:

A man he must be, and not a Devil or spirit, as here it is clear, and by St. Paul, *2 Thess. 2.* where he is called, *the man of sin.* Again, he must be one particular person, and not a number, and the characters thereof be (though obscurely) insinuated. Which reproveth the wicked vanity of Heretics, that would have Christ’s own Vicars, the successors of the chief Apostle, yea the whole order of them for many ages together, to be this Antichrist. (552)

The picture of a singular, end-time Antichrist is consonant with the early patristic exegesis of Church Fathers such as Irenaeus who, McGinn states, argued that “Antichrist must be a single

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<sup>20</sup> Emerson describes exactly the medieval view of Antichrist: “The medieval tradition basically portrayed Antichrist as a diabolical parody of Christ, as an actual physical figure who will appear in human form at a climactic point in history to lead the forces of evil” (20).

human still to come, not a present or future collectivity, however much such might prepare for him” (60). Shakespeare aligns his dramatic vision of the pinnacle of moral evil in the Christian narrative with this same traditional view of Antichrist by representing the two tyrannical kings, Richard and Macbeth, as *figuras* of the end-time tyrant. In other words, the height of moral evil, at least as portrayed in *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, resides in illegitimate kingship, not in the falsehood of a religious office, as the Reformation view purported.

## 1.2 Hassel’s Richard III and the *Geneva Bible* Antichrist

The allusion to Antichrist in Shakespeare’s dramatic portrayal of monarchical tyranny has been noted by some scholars, particularly certain parallels between Richard III and Antichrist as touched upon by R. Chris Hassel in his 1986 paper “Last Words and Last Things: St. John, Apocalypse, and Eschatology in *Richard III*.” In this essay, Hassel identifies a correspondence between *Richard III* and St. John’s Revelation, specifically in the “Argument” preceding the Book of Revelation in the *Geneva Bible*. The Geneva argument speaks of the foreshortened reign of the Antichrist, the great deceiver, who will be permitted to “rage” against the elect until he is finally thrown with his followers into the fires of hell (Geneva 114).

Contrary, however, to the compilers of the *Geneva Bible*,<sup>21</sup> Hassel does not subscribe to the “Protestant” version of the Antichrist as an institution (i.e., the papacy), but rather he views him as a specific man.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, Hassel’s argument coincides with the medieval conception of Antichrist; and even though it may be no more than a hint, it is an insight that is similar to the approach employed in this thesis. Hassel describes Richard as “a good example of antichrist” (35), and he notes that Richard is “also called ‘devil’ more than once in the play” (35): “He proudly numbers among his allies the devil himself” (35).

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<sup>21</sup> Rev. 17:4, annotation “f”: “This woman is the Antichrist, that is, the Pope with the whole bodie of his filthie creatures, as is expounded, verse 18, whose beautie onely standeth in outwarde pome & impudencie and craft like a strumpet” (Geneva 120).

<sup>22</sup> Although Hassel sees parallels between the Geneva “Argument” and *Richard III*, he favours a traditional view of Antichrist as a singular individual, a tyrant, an interpretation that is at odds with the Reformation view presented in the Geneva Bible. So, to elucidate the disparity we here turn to Emerson who gives a good summation of the difference between the Reformation notion of Antichrist that is evident in the Geneva Bible, and the traditional, medieval view of Antichrist derived from Patristic exegesis, such as that found in the works of Irenaeus and Hippolytus: “Protestant controversialists replace the life of Antichrist with the history of the papacy . . . For example, to Protestants Antichrist is not a man possessed since birth by the devil but an institution begun by the devil. Thus Luther insists that the pope comes from the devil and that the ‘Church of the Pope is the Synagogue of Satan’” (232).

Hassel's work lends credence to the claim made in this thesis that Richard is a *figura* of Antichrist; he sees the parallel in the Geneva induction to the book of Revelation. I argue in this thesis, from a different angle, that the figurative relationship between Shakespeare's two tyrant kings and Antichrist is revealed primarily in the biblical allusions salted throughout the text, and secondarily through several strong associations with Antichrist derived from the traditional, medieval model. In essence, we are both saying the same thing only from different perspectives, employing distinct methods, and different sources.

### 1.3 Three Major Signs of Antichrist

Although this thesis will focus on the primary signs of Antichrist, the Bible provides a broader context in which to situate certain common features of the final tyrant and his many *figuras*, both historical and literary. Beyond Emerson's above noted syllabus of characteristics on pages seven to eight, that is of Antichrist as a parody of Christ, and the associations in 2 Thessalonians already listed (i.e., beast, trinity, etc.), in Scripture the most significant passages on Antichrist are located in Daniel, the First Book of the Maccabees, the synoptic Gospels, and, as already mentioned, Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, and finally Revelation. Culled from such provenance, then, Antichrist will be a King (of fierce countenance),<sup>23</sup> a tyrant,<sup>24</sup> a deceiver,<sup>25</sup> a liar,<sup>26</sup> a defiler of the Temple,<sup>27</sup> a warrior,<sup>28</sup> a murderer,<sup>29</sup> diabolically possessed,<sup>30</sup> an idolater,<sup>31</sup> a lover of power and wealth,<sup>32</sup> his reign will be short (three and a half years), and his destruction sudden.<sup>33</sup> Antichrist worships a strange god, Mauzzim, as indicated in Daniel 11:37-39: "Nether shal he regarde the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor care for any God: for he shal magnifie himself above all./But in his place shal he honour the god Mauzzim, & the god whome his fathers knewe not, shal he honour with golde and with silver, and with precious stones, and

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<sup>23</sup> Dan. 8:23, 1 Macc. 1:11-17.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Macc. 1:52, 67.

<sup>25</sup> Dan. 11:23, 1 Macc. 1: 31, Matt. 24:1, Mark 13:5-61, Luke 21:8, John 5:43, 2 Thess. 2:10, 2 John 2:7, Rev.13:14.

<sup>26</sup> 2 Thess. 2: 12, 1 John 2:22.

<sup>27</sup> Dan. 8:11, Dan 11:31, 1 Macc. 1:48, Matt. 24:5, Mark 13:14, Luke 21:20, 2 Thess. 2:4, Rev. 13:6

<sup>28</sup> Dan. 8:24, Dan. 11:22, 44, Rev. 13:4,7, Rev. 19:19.

<sup>29</sup> 1 Macc. 1:25, Rev. 13:15.

<sup>30</sup> 2 Thess. 2:9, Rev. 13:4, Rev. 16:13-14.

<sup>31</sup> Dan. 8:23, 1Macc. 1:46-52.

<sup>32</sup> Dan 11:38-39, 43, 1 Macc. 17-24.

<sup>33</sup> Dan 12:11, 1 Macc. 6:16 [Antiochus Epiphanes reigned over Israel from 167 BC to 164 BC], 2 Thess. 2:8, Rev. 13:5, Rev. 19:19-20.

pleasant things./Thus shal he do in the holdes of Mauzzim with a strange god whome he shal acknowledge” (Geneva 264). He would have others worship him as God, as indicated by Revelation 13:8: “Therefore all that dwell upon the earth, shal worship him” (Geneva 118). Antichrist is guilty of murder, destroying those who will not worship him, again, as evinced by Revelation 13:15: “and shulde cause that as manie as wolde not worship the image of the beast, shulde be killed” (Geneva 119). As well, he is guilty of sorcery by association with the False Prophet (as is Macbeth in his concourse with the witches) as described in Revelation 13: 13-14: “And he did great wonders, so that he made fyre to come downe from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men./And deceived them that dwel on the earth by the signes, which were permitted to him to do in the sight of the beast” (Geneva 119). Finally, Antichrist is guilty of usurping the throne of Christ, as shown in Paul’s Second Epistle to the Thessalonians 2:4: “so that he doeth sit as God in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (Geneva 96).

Among all the biblical characteristics listed above, there are three major signs of Antichrist that I will employ in this thesis as the analytical instruments to uncover literary parallels between Shakespeare’s tyrants and the final world tyrant. First, Antichrist will be a king; second, he will be a deceiver; and third, Antichrist will be a defiler of the Temple of God. These signs, taken together, are demonstrative, recurring characteristics of Antichrist and his *figuras*. Because Antichrist is the final opponent and adversary of Christ the King,<sup>34</sup> he must also be a king; but unlike Christ, he will be a usurper and tyrant-king. Because Christ embodies the truth,<sup>35</sup> Antichrist will embody the lie; he shall be a deceiver *par excellence*. Because Christ glorifies God the Father,<sup>36</sup> Antichrist, as his obverse, will blaspheme God in the very Temple of God; and so, he is a defiler of God’s Temple.

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<sup>34</sup> Matthew 2:1-2: “When Jesus then was borne at Bethlehem in Judea, in the days of Herode the King, beholde, there came Wisemen from the East to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is the King of the Jewes that is borne? for we have sene his starre in the East, and are come to worship him” (Geneva 2). John 18:37: “Pilate then said unto him, Art thou a King then? Jesus answered, Thou saist that I am a King” (Geneva 52). Timothy 6: 14-15: “That thou kepe this commandement without spot, and unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, Which in due time he shal shewe, that is blessed and prince onely, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords” (Geneva 99).

<sup>35</sup> John 14:6: “Jesus said unto him, I am the Way, and the Trueth, & the Life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Geneva 50).

<sup>36</sup> John 17:2-4: “These things spake Jesus and lift up his eyes to heaven, & said, Father the houre is come: glorifie thy Sonne, that thy Sonne also may glorifie thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he shulde give eternal life to all them that thou has given him. And this is life eternal, that they knowe thee to be the onely verie God, and whome thou hast sent, Jesus Christ. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the worke which thou gavest me to do.” (Geneva 51).

That Antichrist will be a king is asserted both in Scripture and by the Fathers of the Church. According to Irenaeus, Antichrist shall arise from obscurity to overthrow three kings who will rule as part of a final ten-kingdom empire governing the world near the end of time. Following the sudden defeat of the three kings, the entire world empire will capitulate to Antichrist (553-554). Scripture also adverts to Antichrist, called “the beast” in Revelation as previously indicated on page 6 of this introduction, ruling over all the earth shortly before the end of time: “And he made all, bothe small and great, riche and poore, fre and bonde, to receive a marke in their right hand or in their forehead./And that no man might bye or sell, save he that had the marke, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:16-17, Geneva 119). Further substantiating the regal aspect of Antichrist, Irenaeus quotes a passage from Daniel affirming his kingship (554):

And in the end of their kingdome, when the rebellious shalbe be consumed, a King of fierece countenance, and understanding darke sentences, shal stand up./And his power shalbe mightie, but not in his strength: and he shal destroie wonderfully & shal prosper, and practise, and shal destroie the mightie, and the holy people./And through his policie also, he shal cause craft to prosper in his hand, and he shal extol himself in his heart, and by peace shal destroy many: he shal also stand up against the prince of princes, but he shal be broken downe without hand (Daniel 8:23-25, Geneva 362).

Because Antichrist will claim the kingship<sup>37</sup> of Christ for himself,<sup>38</sup> his *figuras*, both historical and literary, imitate him by usurping a throne. Such a view of Antichrist, as a wicked pretender to the throne of Christ the King, is derived directly from Scripture,<sup>39</sup> and from the earliest Christian exegetes.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Hippolytus delineates the traits of Antichrist and how they are opposed to those of Christ, specifically mentioning tyranny and deception: “Now, as our Lord Jesus Christ, who is also God, was prophesied of under the figure of a lion, on account of His royalty and glory, in the same way have the Scriptures also aforetime spoken of Antichrist as a lion, on account of his tyranny and violence. For the deceiver seeks to liken himself in all things to the Son of God. Christ is a lion, so Antichrist is also a lion; Christ is a king, so Antichrist is also a king” (206).

<sup>38</sup> Emerson emphasizes Scripture’s claim that Antichrist will attempt to usurp the throne of Christ: “He will blaspheme against God, even claiming to be Christ [Apocalypse 13:1-2]” (40).

<sup>39</sup> 2 Thess. 2:4: “for he doeth sit as God in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (Geneva 96).

<sup>40</sup> Hippolytus, in his *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, not only identifies Antichrist as king and tyrant, but also a son of the devil, and hence a deceiver, as well as usurper of Christ’s throne: “That it is in reality out of the tribe of Dan, then, that that tyrant and king, that dread judge, that son of the devil, is destined to spring and arise” (207). Also, see Hippolytus: “By the beast, then, coming up out of the earth, he means the kingdom of Antichrist; and by the

The next certain sign of Antichrist, for both Protestants and Catholics alike in Shakespeare's early modern audience, is deception. Obviously not every deceiver is necessarily a *figura* of Antichrist; but in the context of kingship, and in combination with the defilement of God's temple, deception takes on a greater significance as a sign of Antichrist. As Paul writes in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, Antichrist's appearance will be in "all deceiveableness" (2 Thess. 2:10, Geneva 97), Daniel says he "shal worke deceitfully" (Dan. 11:23, Geneva 364), the Fathers of the Church, too, emphasize this particular characteristic, as when Irenaeus writes, "And there is in this beast [Antichrist], when he comes, a recapitulation made of all sorts of iniquity and of every deceit" (558). Hippolytus, too, describes Antichrist as the "deceiver" who "seeks to liken himself in all things to the Son of God" (206). It is from such elementary sources that the trait of deception came to be attributed to Antichrist. Emerson emphasizes the importance of these elementary sources for later portrayals of Antichrist: "Commentaries on the Apocalypse also greatly influenced the development of the Antichrist tradition and its iconography. They portray Antichrist as a great deceiver" (39).

Besides kingship and deception, the other primary sign of Antichrist is that he will be a defiler of God's temple. This final sign involves a mysterious nexus with the biblical Abomination of Desolation, the desecration of the Temple of God; indeed, Irenaeus goes so far as to denominate Antichrist as "truly the abomination of desolation" (559). I will argue in the following pages that the defilement of God's temple in *Richard III* and *Macbeth* is tantamount to the Abomination of Desolation, which in Scripture is always a harbinger of Antichrist. The *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* traces the Abomination of Desolation to "167 B.C. when Antiochus Epiphanes placed an altar to Zeus on the altar of God in the Jerusalem temple. . . This abomination underlies the eschatological images of the man of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2: 3-4), the antichrist (1 Jn 2:18, 4:3), the great whore (Rev 17:4) and the beast (Rev 13)" (3). David Lyle Jeffrey in *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* states that "when used by the Church Fathers, *abomination* often has decidedly apocalyptic overtones. St. Hippolytus (in ANF 5.191) understands Daniel as speaking of two abominations, one the specific destructions of Antiochus, the other a more universal reference to the coming of the Antichrist" (Jeffrey 9). The

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two horns he means him and the false prophet after him. And in speaking of the 'horns being like a lamb,' he means that will make himself like the Son of God, and set himself forward as a king" (214).



Abomination of Desolation in Scripture concerns the defilement of what is holy, usually located in the temple of God. In the Old Testament, the temple of God is a physical structure in Jerusalem; in the New Testament, the temple of God is either Jesus Christ himself, or the body of Christ, which is the Church.<sup>41</sup> This teaching on the Church can be found in Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians 12:27: “Now ye are the bodie of Christ, & members for your parte” (Geneva 81); again in Colossians 1:18 “And he [Christ] is the head of the body of the Church” (Geneva 83); and even more explicitly in Ephesians 1:22-23: “hath appointed him [Christ] over all things to be the head to the Church,/Which is his bodie” (Geneva 90). As well, and integral to the argument of this thesis, the human body of the Christian person in the New Testament is also called the temple of God, specifically in 1 Corinthians 6:19: “Know ye not that your bodie is the temple of the holy Ghost” (Geneva 78). I will argue that Shakespeare develops the connection between the idea of the Christian’s body as the temple of God and Antichrist’s defilement of God’s Temple, scripturally portrayed as the Abomination of Desolation, through the *figuras* of Richard and Macbeth, both agents of defilement.

#### 1.4 Witchcraft Associated with Antichrist

Ancillary to the three concrete signposts of Antichrist are certain associations that by their placement in proximity to the gestation of villainy in Shakespeare’s tyrant kings suggest, in a more remote fashion, the presence of Antichrist; chief amongst these is witchcraft. Although I will argue that witchcraft is a harbinger of Antichrist under certain circumstances, it is not necessarily always associated with Antichrist in early modern culture. Stephanie Irene Spotto contends that “the paranoia that a witch could use her power for the benefit or the destruction of her community was widespread in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (53). Citing the *Workes* of King James I, Spotto points out that witchcraft in the early modern era was feared because of its potential for political and social revolution: “In the inverted world, ‘itself turned upside down’, the king’s subjects replace ‘for religion superstition, for true worshippe detestable idolatrie: and to be shorte, for God Sathan, for Christ Antichrist’” (54). Witchcraft was thought to be the result of a diabolic pact with the devil, as Malcolm Gaskill argues: “In the seventeenth century. . . the diabolic pact became the salient characteristic of the witch’s crime—

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<sup>41</sup> Jeffrey so describes “two distinct applications of the biblical Temple available to writers aware of the tradition” (751).

more in line with continental demonology but harder to prove at law” (42). And this is evident in the works of many early modern writers on witchcraft. Jean Bodin, the sixteenth-century French author of the popular treatise *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* (1580) defined a witch as “one who knowingly tries to accomplish something by diabolical means” (45). Francesco Maria Guazzo’s *Compendium Maleficarum* (1602) asserted that “The pact formed between a witch and the devil may be either expressed or tacit. The expressed pact consists of a solemn vow of fidelity and homage made, in the presence of witnesses, to the devil visibly present in some bodily form. The tacit pact involves the offering of a written petition to the devil, and may be done by proxy through a witch or some third person when the contracting party is afraid to see or have speech with the devil” (13). In the *Daemonologie*, King James considers the dual relationship between witches and the devil:

From time that they once plainelie begin to contract with him: The effect of their contract consists in two things; in forms and effects, as I began to tell already; I speak first of that part, wherein the Devill oblishes himself to them by forms, I meane in what shape or fashion he shall come unto them, when they call upon him. And by effects, I understand, in what special sorts of services he bindes himself to be subject unto them (16).

And, because it was feared as a dangerous contagion to the social order, witchcraft was associated with the general apostasy foretold by Paul, in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, to precede the advent of Antichrist. Ryan J. Stark contends that witchcraft, along with demonic possession, were definitely viewed during the early modern period as signs of the end-times:

Widespread witchcraft and demonic possession, functioned as commonplace portents of the apocalypse in most Renaissance demonologies, Catholic and Protestant. Theologians took the accelerated advent of witchcraft in particular as a probable indicator of Satan’s final rage, a sentiment forcefully expressed in Heinrich Kramer’s *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) (526).

Stuart Clark argues that the witches’ pact with the devil “could be seen, primarily, as spiritual apostasy, symbolized by rebaptism at the sabbat. But the non-sacramental significance of baptism and the insistence on both the physical corporeality of devils and their political organization inevitably brought it as close to an act of literal, if indirect, resistance” (119). Clark,

furthermore, points out that English Puritans viewed witches as agents of Satan in their “essential rebelliousness,” a perspective he writes that was based on 1 Samuel 15:23: “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft” (119). Pennethorne Hughes asserts that the orthodox Christian view of sorcery “represents the standard attitude towards the phenomenon of witchcraft held by the Church in the Middle Ages. Its creed was that witchcraft was the direct evidence of Antichrist. Witches were his servants, in league with him against Christendom, and witchcraft was the parody of Christianity (12).”<sup>42</sup> The idea that witchcraft precedes Antichrist, as Jeffrey Burton Russell argues in *The Prince of Darkness*, is derived from the belief that, “the most important of Satan’s many accomplices is the Antichrist, who will come at the end of the world to lead the forces of evil in a last, desperate battle against the good. Heretics, Jews, and (in the later Middle Ages) witches are the most prominent of Satan’s human helpers” (117).

The influence of scholastic theology can be seen in the medieval manuals of the witch hunters, in guidebooks such as the *Malleus Maleficarum* (*The Witch Hammer*, c. 1486)<sup>43</sup> of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger. In the *Malleus*, Kramer and Sprenger claim that witchcraft is one of the greatest of sins because it consists in an occult, or purposely hidden, infidelity to God:

Now when we speak of the Apostasy of witches, we mean the Apostasy of perfidy; and this is so much the more heinous, in that it springs from a pact made with the enemy of the Faith and the way of salvation. For witches are bound to make this pact, which is exacted by that enemy either in part or wholly. (75-76)

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “Apostasy” as “abandonment or renunciation of one’s religious faith or moral allegiance”<sup>44</sup>; it defines “perfidy” as “deceitfulness, untrustworthiness; breach of faith or of a promise; betrayal of trust; treachery.”<sup>45</sup> The implication of the “Apostasy

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<sup>42</sup> P. Hughes validates his claim that the wide-spread practise of witchcraft was thought by early moderns, on the continent at least, to precede Antichrist’s arrival by citing the writings of “Florimond [de Raemond (1540– 17 November 1601), the author of a work *On Antichrist*, as reported by the Jesuit Delrio”: “All those who have afforded us some signs of the approach of Antichrist agree that the increase of sorcery and witchcraft is to distinguish the melancholy period of his advent (178).

<sup>43</sup> Dennis Biggins attributes great authority to the *Malleus*: “The formidable Sprenger and Kramer, who jointly compiled one of the most influential of all European witchcraft treatises, the *Malleus Maleficarum*” (258).

<sup>44</sup> “apostasy, n.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2018, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/9399](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/9399). Accessed 5 January 2019.

<sup>45</sup> “perfidy, n.” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2018, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/140751](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/140751). Accessed 5 January 2019.

of perfidy” is that it is a secret or occult betrayal of the Christian religion, and it is marked by deceit, one of the primary characteristics of Antichrist. Because witches are to be judged, according to Kramer and Sprenger, as “Apostates, since they have made a treaty with death and a compact with hell” (76), they portend a special relationship to Antichrist, who is, according to Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, to be revealed only after what the *Geneva Bible* calls a “departing,” the *Rheims New Testament* calls a “revolt,” and *Bishops’ Bible* calls a “fallyng away.” The annotation to the Rheims passage refers to the revolt as a general apostasy, that is, of “great numbers of Heretics and Apostates revolting from the Church” (417). From Kramer and Sprenger’s explanation of the “Apostasy of witches,” it becomes possible to understand how the medieval anxiety about witchcraft, alluded to by Hughes and Russell earlier in the introduction on page eighteen, might have resulted in the conclusion that a preponderance of witches--as apostates *par excellence*--in the social body could signify the general movement toward apostasy from the Christian faith, and therefore, the advent of Antichrist. According to Clark, the early modern era shared in the world view inherited from medieval paradigms; but the already existent apprehension of witchcraft was exacerbated by the anxieties produced in the upheavals of the Reformation and Renaissance: “The key to the situation was thought by Protestant and Catholic alike to lie in the identification and analysis of Antichrist, a figure representing not merely enmity with Christ but the complete contradiction of Christianity by antithetical doctrines and false miracles” (109). Clark touches on a central pillar of this thesis when he refers to doctrine and false miracles; if one takes doctrine to refer to truth, and false miracle to refer to deception, it is clear that witchcraft, for the early modern and medieval era, impinged on the notion of the coming of Antichrist much as a forecast does for bad weather. If witchcraft implies the adoption of beliefs and practices antithetical to Christianity, then its growth in the social body becomes a premonition of Antichrist, and increases the urgency of identifying this final enemy. Clark’s assertion is important for my argument because it affirms the underlying assumption of this thesis that Shakespeare too, in as much as he was an early modern writer aware of the concerns of his culture, addressed the problem of the “identification and analysis of Antichrist” in at least two of his most popular plays.

Witchcraft is present in both plays, and, indeed, it is from witchcraft that the errors of both Richard and Macbeth derive. The error that poisons the minds of Antichrist and his *figuras* has its roots in deception; and this thesis will contend that deception in both *Richard III* and

*Macbeth*, to a lesser and greater extent, is associated with witchcraft, the apostatic phenomenon that precedes the appearance of Antichrist. For it is through witchcraft, in both plays, that error, in the form of the “lie,”<sup>46</sup> which has its root in Satanic deception<sup>47</sup> is presented to the minds of Shakespeare’s villain/protagonists. McGinn, in a passage on the early Fathers of the Church, discusses Origen’s spiritual interpretation of Paul’s Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, particularly the concept of the “lie” versus the “truth”: “What Christ, the Word and the Truth and Wisdom, destroys by the breath of his mouth (2 Thess., 2:8) is ‘the Lie’ (*to pseudos*)” (64).<sup>48</sup> McGinn’s observation of Origen’s exegesis is meaningful for my argument in that it identifies and authenticates the origin of the concept of Christ as the “truth,” and Antichrist as his antipode, the “lie.” From the Christian perspective, and presumably that of Shakespeare’s audience, a person who rejects Christ can be said to believe in the “lie.”

### 1.5 The Moral Evil of Antichrist: Apparent Good versus Real Good

Because the three major signs of Antichrist involve the concept of moral evil from the Christian perspective, it is of signal importance to elucidate the basic moral philosophy underpinning the tradition that would have been familiar to at least some in Shakespeare’s early modern audience. Scholars such as Lily B. Campbell and Roy Battenhouse have long recognized the influence of medieval theologians on early modern thought. In *Shakespeare’s Tragic Heroes*, Campbell cites the influence of medieval moral philosophy on Shakespeare and his contemporaries, mentioning among a plethora of such thinkers, Thomas Aquinas and Augustine (47). Battenhouse thinks Shakespeare was at least aware of Augustine and perhaps even Aquinas:

Continental editions of the *Summa Theologica*—of which there were many within Shakespeare’s lifetime—must have had some circulation in England even though marginal to the interests of most Elizabethans. . . More likely, it [Shakespeare’s knowledge of Aristotelean ethics and Christian moral theology] would have been

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<sup>46</sup> Hippolytus interprets the apocalyptic phrase descriptive of Antichrist at Revelation 13:11, “‘he spake like a dragon,’” to “mean he is a deceiver, and not truthful” (214).

<sup>47</sup> John 8:44: “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lustes of your father ye wil do: he hathe bene a murtherer from the beginning, & abode not in the trueth, because there is no trueth in him. When he speaketh a lie, then speaketh he of his owne: for he is a liar, and the father thereof” (Geneva 47).

<sup>48</sup> McGinn also explains Origen’s interpretation of what is called the “Little Apocalypse” of Matthew 24: 1-28, a passage particularly relevant to the argument of this thesis: “There he identifies the Abomination of Desolation as ‘the word of the lie that is seen to stand in the holy place of Scripture,’ that is, every form of heresy that misreads or replaces the Scripture. He interprets Antichrist as ‘every word that pretends to be truth when it is not.’” (64).

informed by the accumulated moral theology Shakespeare had absorbed from the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, and some of St. Augustine's more popular works, as well as from other Church fathers whose writings were quoted extensively both by Anglicans and Elizabethan Catholics in their numerous compendiums and tomes of controversy; although, besides this, some reading in Aquinas cannot be ruled out as a possibility (206-207).

While Battenhouse is primarily concerned with the evidence of Augustinian thought in Shakespeare's *oeuvre*, he does not rule out the possibility of a medieval scholastic influence, something positively asserted by David N. Beauregard.<sup>49</sup> It is from scholars such as Campbell, Battenhouse, Beauregard, Paul A. Jorgensen,<sup>50</sup> and Carol Strongin Tufts<sup>51</sup> that the argument presented in this thesis for Shakespeare's adoption of a traditional, or medieval, Christian model of Antichrist is derived.

Augustine, in the *City of God*, writes that, for the Christian, the supreme good is life eternal, by which he means heaven or the enjoyment of God forever; and the supreme evil is death eternal, by which he means exile from God along with punishment in hell forever (COG, Bk. 19, Chap. 4, p. 401). The inference is that God is the source of good, which is affirmed by Augustine in the *Enchiridion* where he writes that "the only cause of all created things, whether heavenly or earthly, whether visible or invisible, is the goodness of the Creator, the one true God; and that nothing exists but Himself that does not derive its existence from Him" (240). The idea of God's goodness is concisely articulated in one of Augustine's most profound theological treatises, *On the Trinity*, where he argues that God's goodness is of his essence: "But it is an impiety to say

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<sup>49</sup> Beauregard is even more convinced that Shakespeare was aware of the theology of Aquinas: "the Elizabethan poetics of Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare goes hand in hand with Aristotelian-Thomistic moral psychology, whether derived from secondary or original sources" (913).

<sup>50</sup> Jorgensen implies that Shakespeare was familiar with Thomistic theology even if from secondary sources: "St. Thomas Aquinas is cited by a Renaissance writer [Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*] to prove that 'a man's body can be affected by his imagination in every way which is naturally correspondent with the imaginative faculty'" (34-35).

<sup>51</sup> Tufts goes further than other scholars asserting that scholastic moral thought is at the heart of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: "As Shakespeare dramatizes the scholastic conception of good and evil all the bloodletting that is at the metaphoric center of the play causes the world to collapse in on itself as Macbeth's career becomes a representation of Augustine's statement in *The Confessions*—and it was Augustine's Neoplatonic thought which Aquinas brought into harmony with the philosophy of Aristotle—that evil, being 'nothing but a privation of good . . . can continue to the point where a thing ceases to exist altogether' (*Confessions* 60)—to become, in effect, nothing" (174).

that God Himself is not His own goodness, but that it is in Him as in a subject in relation to His own goodness, and that this goodness is not a substance or rather essence, and that God himself is not his own goodness, but that it is in Him as in a subject” (111). Because, therefore, God’s essence is goodness itself,<sup>52</sup> He is the proper end of all who seek the good. Aquinas, coming later in the Middle Ages, articulates a very clear definition of the supreme good in the *Summa Theologica*: “To be good belongs pre-eminently to God. For a thing is good according to its desirableness . . . All things by desiring their own perfection, desire God Himself, inasmuch as the perfections of all things are so many similitudes of the divine being . . . For good is attributed to God . . . inasmuch as all desired perfections flow from Him as from the first cause” (ST, Pt. 1 Q. 6. Art. 1-2, p. 28). Subsidiary to the concept of the good are the notions of the real good and the apparent good. These two terms assist in the comprehension of the moral evil that identifies Antichrist and his *figuras*, because it is the inordinate desire for an apparent good, such as the temporal power of the world empire coveted by Antichrist and the various local thrones coveted by the likes of Richard and Macbeth, that energizes the destructive actions of these tyrannical usurpers.

The error that can be ascribed to Antichrist and his Shakespearean *figuras*, Richard and Macbeth, by observing their manifest aspirations, is that they have mistaken an apparent good for a real good. It is not that apparent goods are evil in and of themselves, it is rather that they must be recognized as similitudes of the divine goodness, and as such, mere sign posts pointing to the real, true good of God, the final end and perfection of all creatures. But when the desire for an apparent good is inordinate, the person can be said to be enslaved to a mere idol, worshipping through unfettered desire something of infinitely less value than God. According to Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*, the ultimate cause of this moral evil, also called “sin,” is the inordinate

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<sup>52</sup> Aquinas also makes this point in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*: “[2] To be in act is for each being its good. But God is not only a being in act; He is His very act of being, as we have shown. God is, therefore, goodness itself, and not only good. [3] Again, as we have shown, the perfection of each thing is its goodness. But the perfection of the divine being is not affirmed on the basis of something added to it, but because the divine being, as was shown the divine being is not affirmed on the basis of something added to it, but because the divine being, as was shown above, is perfect in itself. The goodness of God, therefore, is not something added to His substance; His substance is His goodness . . . Moreover, each good thing that is not its goodness is called good by participation. But that which is named by participation has something prior to it from which it receives the character of goodness. This cannot proceed to infinity, since among final causes there is no regress to infinity, since the infinite is opposed to the end [finis]. But the good has the nature of an end. We must, therefore, reach some first good, that is not by participation good through an order toward some other good, but is good through its own essence. This is God. God is, therefore, His own goodness (SCG, Bk.1, Chap. 38, Art. 2-4, p. 152-153).

love of self in preference to God (ST, Pt. I-II, Q. 77 Art. 4, p. 937); and this inordinate self-love is just another name for self-idolatry. Richard and Macbeth believe the “lie,” which is the error of Antichrist<sup>53</sup> who believes his ultimate good consists in being adored as God, as referenced previously (2 Thessalonians 2:4: “so that he doeth sit as God in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God,” Geneva 96), by usurping Christ’s throne, instead of acknowledging his obligation as a creature to worship his Creator.

## 1.6 Preview of Chapters on *Richard III* and *Macbeth*

In the two chapters that follow, I argue that biblical allusions in *Richard III* and *Macbeth* pertain to the figure of Antichrist, and that such an association amplifies the dramatic content of the plays by association with the sublime cosmic narrative of the Bible. This thesis will establish a methodology with which to analyze the allusions selected from the most current work on biblical allusions in Shakespeare. The chapter on *Richard III* will argue for an analogy between Antichrist and Richard as seen through the prism of the villain’s illegitimate aspiration to assume the throne, and to do so through deception and sacrilegious murder of the innocent. I will argue that witchcraft functions as a harbinger of Antichrist in *Richard III* in as much as Richard is *figura* of that final tyrant. The *Macbeth* chapter will focus on the interior landscape of a man who resembles Antichrist in the sense that what should be the temple of God, that is to say, the body of the Christian person as Paul describes it in 1 Corinthians 3:16,<sup>54</sup> has become, for Macbeth, an abomination of desolation. I will also argue that witchcraft, in *Macbeth*, is intimately bound with the concept of deception, which I have shown to be a primary sign of Antichrist in this introduction. First, I will examine the outward action of the political man, Richard, and then, I will consider the inner landscape of the contemplative man, Macbeth. My aim in this thesis is to explain how both characters have been dramatically constructed to shadow forth the cruel lineaments of Antichrist.

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<sup>53</sup> Augustine, in the *Enchiridion*, emphasizes how, for the human creature, the evil of error lies in its magnitude: “It is to his grievous injury that a man is deceived when he does not believe what leads to eternal life, or believes what leads to eternal death” (243).

<sup>54</sup> “Knowe ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16, Geneva 78)



## Chapter 2

### 2 Intimations of Antichrist in *Richard III*

Shakespeare invests his most vivacious villain, Richard III, with the image and likeness of evil as it is portrayed in Scripture through a series of allusions that serve to alert the biblically informed of the Crookback's role as a *figura*<sup>55</sup> of Antichrist, who in turn is the image and likeness of his spiritual father, Satan. *Richard III* is not allegory, nor is it homiletic, or morality play, although it has elements of all three.<sup>56</sup> By alluding to the traditional, scriptural figure of evil, Shakespeare's drama partakes of the greater, cosmic narrative of the Bible. This chapter will argue that Shakespeare's drama conveys doctrine, primarily the traditional Christian doctrine on evil, through a mimetic action that is highly coloured by pointed references to biblical texts. Furthermore, it will be seen that Richard's stated aspirations to "play the devil," to deceive others as to his moral state, and to violate the temple of God, both in the desecration of his own conscience and in his merciless destruction of his fellow creatures, confirm my contention that Shakespeare intended his villain to mimic, or shadow forth, the character of Antichrist.

#### 2.1 Elements of Richard's Character

Richard III has been variously described by critics as Shakespeare's most kinetic villain<sup>57</sup>, a Machiavellian,<sup>58</sup> a Senecan hero,<sup>59</sup> a criminal,<sup>60</sup> a devil-king,<sup>61</sup> a brilliant and cunning man,<sup>62</sup> a

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<sup>55</sup> Auerbach: "*figura* is something real and historical which announces something else that is real and historical. The relation between the two events is revealed by an accord or similarity. . . Figural prophecy implies the interpretation of one worldly event through another" (29-58).

<sup>56</sup> Shakespeare's audience witnesses, by way of verbal parallel to Scripture, the mimetic operation of Richards's will in conformity with the final biblical incarnation of the culmination of human evil. Unlike when Richard declares his affinity with the "formal Vice, Iniquity" (3.1.82), or even when he avows "I play the devil" (1.3.338), his imitation of Antichrist is never explicitly announced, rather Shakespeare judiciously sows a trail of clues as to the identity of Richard's biblical model and those clues are contained in the biblical allusions.

<sup>57</sup> Wheeler (308).

<sup>58</sup> Norland (246).

<sup>59</sup> Brooks (734-35).

<sup>60</sup> Goll (23).

<sup>61</sup> Endel (120).

<sup>62</sup> Hebert (238).

picaresque hero,<sup>63</sup> a Herod-like figure,<sup>64</sup> a frustrated lover,<sup>65</sup> a narcissist,<sup>66</sup> and the abortive embodiment of witchcraft.<sup>67</sup> Bernard Spivack, in his 1958 book *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil*, contends Shakespeare primarily employed the Vice figure, adapted and modified from traditional morality plays, to accentuate the iniquitous character of Richard III. Richard's character, according to Spivack, is genealogically cognate with the Vice (397). The Vice character springs from not just the idea of the seven deadly sins, but from a combination of all the vices; and, as Spivack says, he is a "showman and satirist—a nimble trickster, dissembler, and humorist—on the side of evil" (132). This chapter's contention that Richard is a *figura* of Antichrist supplements Spivack's argument by adding another level of meaning in that Scripture's figure of ultimate human evil shares many of the aspects of the Vice,<sup>68</sup> particularly a propensity for deception.

John C. Bromley views Richard not so much as a figure of the devil, or the Vice, or a Machiavel, but rather verifies Richard's own view of himself in the play as "I am I" (32), a supremely individualized, unique theatrical character in Shakespeare's roster of villains. Bromley's view of Richard is significant for the argument of this chapter because Richard's appropriation of the phrase "I am I" comes very close to Antichrist's usurpation of Christ's claim to godhood.<sup>69</sup> In his 1971 monograph *The Shakespearean Kings*, Bromley delineates Richard's character as deriving from a great burst of genius, an ambitious energy seeking outlet but frustrated with the boredom of an appointed role (34). But for Bromley, Richard's weakness, the cause of his ultimate failure, is an excess of morality (37). Bromley's insight comes, perhaps unconsciously, close to this chapter's argument, that is that Richard, like Antichrist, defiles God's temple with blasphemous boasting.<sup>70</sup> By pointing to Richard's view of himself as "I am I," Bromley identifies a phrase that

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<sup>63</sup> Heilman (60).

<sup>64</sup> Collley (451).

<sup>65</sup> Kreiger (32).

<sup>66</sup> Cluck (144).

<sup>67</sup> Smith (154).

<sup>68</sup> Emerson points out the central role of vice in apocalyptic literature: "Traditionally, one prominent sign of the end will be the great increase in the power and number of the vices. Medieval literature often places Antichrist in eschatological context by coupling him with personified evil" (52).

<sup>69</sup> Hippolytus, an early father of the Church, writes of Antichrist's self-idolatry, and its effect of defiling God's temple: "he will make himself like the Son of God and set himself forward as king" (214).

<sup>70</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:4: "so that he doeth sit as God in the Temple of God, shewing him self that he is God" (Geneva 98).

is redolent of God's identification of himself to Moses as "I am that I am."<sup>71</sup> In his 1969 book *Shakespearean Tragedy: Its Art and Christian Premises*, Roy Battenhouse contends that intellectual pride blinds, but does not annul, Richard's conscience. Referring to Augustine's *Confessions*, Battenhouse raises the issue of motive, which he says consists in the idea that the "criminal acts always for the sake of some beguiling good" (189). The reference to Augustine's insight into the mechanism of criminal motivation supports the contention of this thesis that the "lie" of Antichrist, and of his *figuras*, has its basis in the inordinate desire of an apparent good, the equivalent of Battenhouse's "beguiling good," as discussed on page 22 of the introduction. It is a beguiling good because it results in deception on the part of the person who desires it; and that deception is an error, in Antichrist's case an error of magnitude, as to the real good. Because the error of Antichrist is one of great consequence, it is referred to as "the lie," in contrast to "the truth" of Christ.

J. Leeds Barroll in his 1974 book *Artificial Persons* argues that for the Renaissance stage, the dramatic character is en fleshed "through [his] aspirations to [his] individual goals" (254). For the Renaissance dramatist, such a process meant freedom to explore the known range of personalities, in combination with the plenitude of human aspirations (254). Through the prism of Barroll's analytical model, Shakespeare's Richard III is possessed by three aspirations: to play the devil; to deceive others as to his moral state by appearing holy and quoting Scripture; and to arrogate to himself the powers of God, a kind of self-idolatry which defiles the temple of God through blasphemous presumption. The validity of these claims will be demonstrated by an analysis of the biblical allusions that verify the portrayal presented here of Richard as a literary *figura* of Antichrist. All of these aspirations are united under Richard's inordinate desire to be king, an ambition that reflects the major attributes of Antichrist; that is, that he shall usurp the kingship of Christ, he shall be a deceiver, and he shall defile the temple of God. Richard's personality is modified by his aspirations. To play the devil, he must be cruel and forgo compassion for his fellow creatures, but in doing so he also forsakes compassion for himself, as evinced in an aside near the end of the play just before leading his soldiers into battle: "Let not

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<sup>71</sup> Exodus 3.13-14: "Then Moses said unto God, Beholde, when I shal come unto the children of Israel, and shal say unto them, The God of your fathers hathe sent me unto you: if thei say unto me, What is his Name? what answere shal I give them?/And God answered Moses, I AM THAT I AM. Also he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Geneva 25).

our babbling dreams affright our souls;/Conscience is but a word that cowards use” (5.3.309-310). In deceiving others, Richard falls prey to self-deception; he is caught in the web of his own lie as alluded to in his reaction to the night’s dream, full of ghostly apparitions, just before the final battle on Bosworth Field: “Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good/That I myself have done unto myself?/O no! Alas, I rather hate myself/For hateful deeds committed by myself./I am a villain. Yet I lie, I am not.” (5.3.188-192). Richard’s ghostly visitors have revealed to his conscience the horror of his aspirations; he has desired to play the devil, to be a villain, and he has enacted his desires; but the moral consequences have always been pushed into the future. Now, Richard, faced with the accusations of his victims, confronts the horror of his own defiled temple, the horror of his soul’s image, and the good he sought for himself is unmasked revealing the ugliness of evil. Richard cannot face his own image, instead he accuses himself of mendacity so as to evade the truth, thereby maintaining his self-deception without which he could not continue on his fateful path. Richard has previously claimed god-like powers over the life and death of others, as when, after his first encounter with old Queen Margaret in 1.3, he confesses, in an aside, to have disposed of his brother Clarence “whom I have indeed cast in darkness” (1.3.326). The association of the words “cast in darkness” with the well-known biblical passages in 2 Peter 2:4: “For if God spared not the Angels, that had sinned, but caste them downe into hell and delivered them into chaines of darkenes, to be kept unto damnation” (Geneva 111); Revelation 20:10: “And the devil that deceived them was cast into a lake of fyre & brimstone” (Geneva 121); and in Revelation 20:14: “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fyre” (Geneva 121), bespeaks a desired similitude, on Richard’s behalf, to the divine potency over creatures. Casting a creature into darkness sounds, from a biblical perspective, like something only God could do, since, properly speaking, a creature murders or kills another creature; it is really only God who casts a soul into darkness (i.e., hell). Richard’s use of Scriptural language reveals a sense of exaltation at the thought of his power over the mortal life of others. Richard in the end laments the sad state of his own mortality, “And if I die, no soul will pity me” (5.3.202).

## 2.2 Shaheen’s Biblical References in Shakespeare’s Plays

Whereas Hassel’s work on *Richard III* arrives at a similar conclusion to this thesis, albeit by the divergent method of comparing the structure of Shakespeare’s *Richard III* to the Geneva Bible’s

induction to the Book of Revelation, the specific contention argued in these pages is supported by the work of Naseeb Shaheen in his monumental 1999 reference manual *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays*. Shaheen identifies biblical allusions in the play, a service that grants the Shakespeare scholar evidence from the text with which to build an argument. Unlike Hassel's interpretation, the approach taken here uses Shaheen's identification of specific biblical allusions located in Shakespeare's text. The biblical allusions function not so much to reveal Richard's future doom, which is known through the historical record, but to align his destruction with the biblical destruction of cosmic evil, and such insight, available to the biblically literate in Shakespeare's audience, acts as a prophylactic from over-identification with the protagonist-villain: for who but the morally insane would sustain confederation with Antichrist? The structural features of *Richard III*, the protagonist's rapid rise to power<sup>72</sup> through craft and deception, hypocrisy, open tyranny, and sudden destruction, parallel the biblical career of Antichrist.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> By Act III, scene 7, Richard, by hypocritically assuming the guise of a holy man uninterested in the trappings of power, has managed to convince the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and citizens to acclaim him de facto King. See *Richard III*: "Alas, why would you heape this care on me?/I am unfit for state and majesty./I do beseech you take it not amiss,/I cannot yield to you" (3.7.203-206). See also Irenaeus: "And Jeremiah does not merely point out his [Antichrist's] sudden coming . . ." (559).

<sup>73</sup> For Antichrist's rapid rise to power see Rev. 13:1-5: "And I sawe a beast rise out of the sea, having seven heads, and ten hornes, and upon his hornes were ten crownes, and upon his heads the name of blasphemie./And the beast which I sawe, was like a leopard, and his fete like a beares, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power and his throne, & and great authoritie./And I sawe on of his heads as it were wounded to death, but his deadlie wounde was healed, and all the worlde wondered and followed the beast [Antichrist]./And they worshipped the dragon [Satan] which gave power unto the beast, & they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast! who is able to warre with him!/And there was given unto him a mouth, that spake great things and blasphemies, and power was given unto him, to do two and fortie months [three and half years]" (Geneva 118). For Antichrist's use of deception see 2 Thess. 2:9-10: "Even him [Antichrist] whose coming is by the working of Satan, with all power and signes, and lying wonders,/And in all deceivableness of unrighteousness, among them that perish, because thei received not the love of the trueth [Christ], that they might be saved" (Geneva 97). For Antichrist's hypocrisy see Daniel 11:21: "And in his place shal stand up a vile persone [Antichrist], to whome they shal not give the honour of the kingdome: but he shal come in peaceably, & obtaine the kingdome by flatteries" (Geneva 364). For Antichrist's open tyranny see Rev. 13:7: "And it was given unto him to make warre with the Saintes, and to overcome them, & power was given him over everie kindred and tongue, and nation" (Geneva 118). Also, Rev. 13:15: "and shulde cause that as manie as wolde not worhip the image of the beast [Antichrist], shulde be killed" (Geneva 119). For Antichrist's sudden destruction see Rev. 19:19-20: "And I sawe the beast [Antichrist], and the Kings of the earth, and their warriers gathered together to make battel against him [Christ], that sate on the horse & against his souldiers./But the beast was taken, and with him that false prophete that wroght miracles before him, whereby he deceived thme that received the beastes marke, & and them that worshiped his image. Theye both were alive cast into a lake of fyre, burning with brimstone" (Geneva 121). Also see Daniel 11:45: "And he [Antichrist] shal plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious and holie mountaine, yet he shal come to his end, & none shal helpe him" (Geneva 364).

Building on the earlier work of Richmond Noble, Shaheen records some 1,160 biblical allusions in the dramatic works of Shakespeare (39), including some sixty-eight in *Richard III*, from which the present chapter will draw.<sup>74</sup> Because there has been considerable speculation by scholars regarding Shakespeare's use of biblical allusion, it is more than a little prudent to select a recognized authority in this field, such as Shaheen, whose work reflects a cautious, methodical approach. Much of the validity of this chapter's argument, then, is dependent on the criteria Shaheen employs to certify a biblical allusion in Shakespeare. Shaheen's "criteria for a valid reference" (67) establishes precisely what constitutes a biblical allusion in Shakespeare. According to Shaheen, there are three categories of biblical references: certain, probable, or possible (73). With regard to the category of "certain," Shaheen cites examples such as Claudius's confession in *Hamlet* that his murder of the King has "the primal eldest curse upon't" (3.3.37): "we can be reasonably certain that this is a reference to Cain's murder of Abel" (68). The second category of "probable," but not "certain," allusions "consist[s] mainly of striking words and phrases that seem to be borrowed from Scripture, or else contain figures or ideas that are peculiarly biblical" (69). One of the examples that Shaheen gives here is Hamlet's description of Claudius as a "mildewed ear,/Blasting his wholesome brother" (3.4.64-65), an allusion to Pharaoh's dream of seven years of drought in Genesis 41.6 (Shaheen 69) ["And lo, seven thinne ears, & blasted with the East winde, sprang up after them" Genesis 18]. For the third category of "possible," Shaheen cautions that "we are dangerously close to nothing more than a parallel idea, a resemblance rather than a reference" (70) and cites the example of Iago's profession to Othello (3.3.117), "My lord, you know I love you," which may be an echo of Peter's response to Jesus in John 21.15-27 ["Yea Lord, you knowest that I love thee" Geneva 54], or it may simply be the iteration of a "very common expression" (71).

### 2.3 Shakespeare's Bible

Although it may well be impossible to determine which version of the Bible Shakespeare used, this thesis will consider the texts from the Geneva, Bishops', or Rheims in an objective quest for the most appropriate elucidation of the identified allusion. Even if, however, Shakespeare exclusively used the Geneva Bible, such a fact would not gainsay the traditional conception of Antichrist at the back of *Richard III* as suggested by Hassel's deference to the traditional

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<sup>74</sup> See appendix for Shaheen's list of biblical allusions in *Richard III*.

Antichrist type when applying a parallel interpretation of the play from the Geneva “Argument” to Revelation. But because the conception of Antichrist proposed here is in accordance with the medieval, traditional one, it seems more likely that Shakespeare was not wedded to one version of the Bible as one would expect from an ideologically committed proponent of the Reformation. Although Shaheen’s work is considered by some scholars as authoritative (e.g., Hamlin 66), other scholars, such as David N. Beauregard, argue that Shaheen’s *Biblical References in Shakespeare’s Plays* is biased in favour of the Geneva Bible, arbitrarily excluding the Rheims New Testament which was available in Elizabethan England, as Shakespeare’s primary source:

In fact, the evidence for Shakespeare’s use of the Geneva is not all that compelling. Shaheen claims that in approximately thirty passages (out of 1160) Shakespeare “clearly refers to the Geneva translation” (39). But of the four New Testament examples he gives, two are identical to Rheims. One is labelled “a clear reference to the Geneva,” although Rheims followed Geneva, and the other is given to Geneva without mention of Rheims. In these cases, there is no such “clear reference” to Geneva, and Shakespeare could well have used the later Rheims version. (Beauregard 320)

Beauregard goes even further and suggests that there are considerably more “word echoes” from the Rheims New Testament in Shakespeare than from the earlier Geneva text, which had been incorporated by the Rheims compilers (323). Noting Shakespeare’s “knowledge of Catholic matters and his ‘references’ corresponding to the Rheims New Testament,” Beauregard, in his paper “Shakespeare and the Rheims New Testament,” contends that Fulke’s New Testament would have been a rich source of information available in a society strictly censorious of Catholic literature (107). Although John Henry de Groot, writing in 1946, thinks the probability that Shakespeare used a Catholic Bible to be remote, he does not think Shakespeare’s access to the Rheims altogether impossible:

The Rheims New Testament, first of Catholic translations, was not published until 1582. It was, of course, proscribed in England, and its circulation must have been small. Knowledge of the text would have been spread somewhat through the publication in 1589 of William Fulke’s *The Text of the New Testament of Jesus Christ*, translated out of the Vulgar Latine. (160)

The Antichrist alluded to in *Richard III* bears no resemblance to the office of the Pope, as suggested by Protestant reformers, especially by those who compiled the Geneva Bible.<sup>75</sup>

It is prudent, from a scholarly perspective, to compare the biblical allusions in *Richard III* to the three most common texts to which Shakespeare may have had access: namely, the Geneva Bible, the Rheims New Testament, and the Bishops' Bible. For the sake of concision and coherence, this thesis will quote from the Geneva Bible primarily; references from the Rheims and Bishops' Bibles will be cited in footnotes.

#### 2.4 Ambition to Play the Devil

Richard's *modus operandi*, which speaks directly to his aspiration to play the devil, is first revealed by a striking verbal self-portrait that connects his actions to Satan; and, from the Christian perspective, the desire to imitate Satan implies an affinity to Antichrist, the human reflection of the image and likeness of the devil, just as those who imitate Jesus Christ, the human reflection of the image and likeness of God the Father, are identified as belonging to Christ. Richard adverts to his own *imitatio diaboli* early on in the play in 1.3:

And thus I clothe my naked villainy  
With odd old ends stolen forth of Holy Writ,  
And seem a saint, when most I play the devil. (335-37)

Shaheen remarks on similarities to Matt. 4.1-11 and Luke 4.1-13: "Like Satan who tempted Christ with Scripture. . . so also Richard disguises his villainy 'with a piece of scripture,' and with texts 'stol'n forth of holy writ' (1.3.333, 336)" (344). The passages in Matthew and Luke relate Christ's temptation by Satan in the desert. The most relevant details occur in Matthew at 4.5-7:

Then the devil toke him up into the holie Citie, & set him on a pinnacle of the temple,

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<sup>75</sup> *Geneva Bible* 13: 11, annotation p: "As the kingdome of Christ is from heaven, & bringeth men thither: so the Popes kingdome is of the earth & leadeth to perdition, & is begone, & is established by ambition, covetousness, beastlelines, craft, treason & tyranie" (118). See also *Geneva Bible* 13:11, annotation e: "Suche as may be understand by mans reason: for about 666 years after this revelation the Pope or Antichrist began to be magnifieth in the worlde" (119).



And said unto him, If thou be the Sonne of God, cast thy self downe: for it is written, that he wil give his Angels charge over thee, and with their hands they shal lifte thee up, lest at any time you shuldest dash thy fote against a stone.

Jesus said unto him, It is written againe, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. (Geneva 3)

With minor alteration in the order of temptations, Luke 4.9-13 is remarkably similar:

Then he broght him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Sonne of God, cast thy self downe from hence,

For it is written, That he will give his Angels charge over thee to keep thee:

And with their hands they shal lift thee up, lest at any time thou shuldest dash thy fote against a stone.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. (Geneva 29)

The biblically literate in Shakespeare's audience would recognize the association with Christ's temptation in the desert, recalling Satan's ignominious defeat in his attempt to purloin Scripture for his own exaltation. Richard's satanic mimesis was foredoomed by his self-declared ambition to "play the devil." But like the final Antichrist, Richard remains blind to the consequences of his decision to imitate the devil.

Richard's acknowledged identification with the biblical paradigm of evil is affirmed by the other characters in the play. There is so much external affirmation of Richard's evil character that it encrusts his image with the likeness of the devil; and indeed, biblical allusions register in the imagination of those familiar with Scripture so much so that a satanic shadow is cast in menacing form behind Richard. Throughout the play, Richard is referred to as a devil (e.g., 1.2.45); indeed, in the second scene Anne calls him a "foul devil" (1.2.50) and a "devilish slave" (1.2.90). The description of his character by others in the play confirms Richard in his aspiration to play the devil and to be a villain.

Anne, followed by Elizabeth later, validates Richard's success in playing the devil. Consider Anne's angry imprecation in the first act when Richard peremptorily halts the funeral procession

of Anne's father-in-law, the saintly King Henry VI: "Avaunt, thou dreadful minister of Hell!" (1.2.46). Shaheen locates Shakespeare's allusion in the Geneva Bible at Matthew 4:10: "Then said Jesus unto him, Auoide Satan," the very passage to which Shakespeare has Richard allude in the speech in 1.3 just discussed. These are not quite the same words, but Shaheen contends that "avaunt" and "avoide" were equivalent terms in the Elizabethan period (339).<sup>76</sup>

## 2.5 Richard's Ambition to Deceive

Examples abound of Richard's larding his speeches with pieces of scripture, usually to deceive others about his moral state. One of these is found in the very speech which Richard provides as an example of how he uses pieces of scripture to deceive others into thinking him holy, rather than corrupt. Richard reveals his own version of satanic pretence in a soliloquy at 1.3.334: "tell them that God bids us do good for evil," that follows directly after he has demurred publicly from condemning Margaret ["I cannot blame her. By God's holy Mother,/She hath had too much wrong, and I repent/My part that I have done to her" (1.3.305-307)], and having subsequently been praised by Rivers for exhibiting Christian virtue. Shaheen detects here a "certain" biblical allusion on Shakespeare's part, adding that he sees "no corresponding passages in his [Shakespeare's] sources" (343), evidence that the allusion is not second hand, or borrowed, but rather is directly attributable to Scripture. Shaheen delineates four "certain" references beginning with Matthew 5:44, "doe good to them that hate you, and pray for them which hurt you" (Geneva 4).<sup>77</sup> Next Shaheen lists 1 Thess. 5.15, "see that none recompence evil for evil unto any man: but ever follow that which is good" (Geneva 96).<sup>78</sup> Additionally, Shaheen identifies Rom 12.21, "be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with goodness" (Geneva 75).<sup>79</sup> Finally, there is Luke 6.27, "love your enemies: do wel to them which hate you" (Geneva, 30).<sup>80</sup> There is a

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<sup>76</sup> The Bishops' Bible (488) agrees with the Geneva Bible, but the Rheims version, "Avant Satan" (6), is here closer to Shakespeare.

<sup>77</sup> The passage appears the same in the Bishops' Bible, whereas the Rheims exchanges "persecute and abuse you" (9) for the Geneva's "hurt you and persecute you," these differences again providing no clue to just what bible Shakespeare used.

<sup>78</sup> Again, the Bishops' Bible follows the Geneva, but the Rheims substitutes the word "render" (413) for "recompence" and "pursue" (413) for "follow"; otherwise it, too, is much the same, and therefore we cannot determine which variant Shakespeare used.

<sup>79</sup> The Bishops' Bible agrees here with the Geneva, and so too does the Rheims, except that it has "over- come in good the evil" (305), a small difference that brings its nouns closer to Shakespeare's.

<sup>80</sup> The Bishops' Bible and the Rheims differ by one word; instead of "wel" both read "good" (524). Again, this change in the Bishops' and the Rheims is nearer to Shakespeare's language.

blasphemous<sup>81</sup> quality to Richard's allusion to Scripture in the soliloquy previously mentioned, which he utters in the midst of describing his pretence of piety; and this is especially so since he is adverting to the nature of God. Richard admits, in a mocking tone, that he means to employ a facade of goodness for his own benefit, a perverse imitation of Christian charity. There is high irony in Richard's arrogation of the Christian precept, given his admission of duplicity, and the fact that Rivers has just complimented him on his show of virtue: "A virtuous and Christian-like conclusion--/To pray for them that have done scathe to us" (1.3.315-316). The references here also relate analogically to Richard's affinity with Antichrist<sup>82</sup> through his imitation of the devil. Both Antichrist and Satan employ deception to beguile their intended victims, as when the devil employs Scripture to tempt Christ in the desert,<sup>83</sup> and as when the King of the North [a figure of Antichrist as agreed upon by biblical exegetes<sup>84</sup>] in Daniel 11:20 is described as "a vile person, to whome they shal not give the honour of the kingdome: but he shal come in peaceably, & obtaine the kingdome by flatteries" (Geneva 364). Certainly, Richard is vile, and certainly, he obtains the kingdom, in part, at least, by flatteries. As well, Antichrist is predicted by Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 2:10, to deceive his followers with "all power and signes, and lying wonders" (Geneva 97).<sup>85</sup> Richard deceives his followers—at the very least the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and

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<sup>81</sup> Revelation 13:6: "And he [Antichrist] opened his mouth unto blasphemie against God, to blaspheme his Name and his tabernacle, & they who dwel in heaven" (Geneva 118).

<sup>82</sup> As distinct from the Vice figure of late medieval/early Renaissance morality plays. Satan and Antichrist are both biblical figures, while Vice belongs strictly to the stage. Shakespeare is clearly referring to Scripture, and while the figures of Satan and Antichrist do appear in the late medieval mystery plays they are not intended as allegorical in the same sense that Vice always is as Bernard Spivack explains in *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil*: "The Devil, who in the Christian mythos is the father of evil, has only a negligible place in the morality drama. In the cyclical mysteries and in the miracles he is a familiar personage—indispensable to such dramatized episodes of the Christian story as the Revolt of the Angels, the Temptation of Christ, and the Harrowing of Hell. But for several reasons he does not properly belong in homiletic allegory, and the morality plays reflect that fact. . . It is only in the later Elizabethan drama of literal plot and compact human characters that the Devil reasserts himself as a dramatic figure of some consequence" (130-131).

<sup>83</sup> Matthew 4:5-6: "Then the devil toke him up into the holie Citie, & set him on a pinnacle of the temple,/And said unto him, If thou be the Sonne of God, cast thy self downe: for it is written, that he wil give his Angels charge over thee, and with their hands they shal lifte thee up, lest at any time you shuldest dash thy fote against a stone" (Geneva 3).

<sup>84</sup> D.S. Russell in *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* locates the first mention of Antichrist in the Book of Daniel: "He is here described as a king coming from the mysterious north supported by chariots, horsemen and many ships who will overthrow country after country and enter into 'the glorious land'" (277).

<sup>85</sup> Richard's manipulation of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and citizens of London is redolent of Paul's *man of sinne* in 2 Thessalonians who, through deception, manages to convince his many followers of his right to rule them. The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians continues: "And in all deceivableness of unrighteousness, among them that perish, because they received not the love of the trueth, that thy might be saved./And therefore God shal send strong delusion, that they shulde beleve lyes." (Geneva 97).

citizens of London – with lying wonders, especially in his pose as a holy man, as proclaimed by Buckingham: “Two props of virtue for a Christian prince,/To stay him from the fall of vanity; And see, a book of prayer in his hand--/True ornaments to know a holy man” (3.7.95-98). The references that Shaheen identifies here, then, reinforce the contention that Richard is Shakespeare’s *figura* of Antichrist.

Richard revels in his propensity for deception<sup>86</sup> in the various instances throughout the play where he displays a studied pretence of piety, such as when he admits to using scripture for his own ends (1.3.133-137), and when he appears before the Lord Mayor of London and his Aldermen (3.7.70-79). Shaheen spots a “certain” biblical reference in Buckingham’s description of the moral difference between Edward and his brother Richard at 3.7:

This prince is not an Edward,  
He is not lulling on a lewd love-bed,  
But on his knees at meditation;  
Not dallying with a brace of courtesans,  
But meditating with two deep divines;  
Not sleeping, to engross his idle body,  
But praying, to enrich his watchful soul. (70-76)

The direct reference, according to Shaheen, abides in the words “sleeping,” “praying,” and “watchful,” which bear affinity to Matthew 26.40-41: “He came unto the disciples, and founde them a slepe, & saide to Peter, What? colde ye not watche with me one houre? Watch, and pray” (Geneva 15).<sup>87</sup> The biblical scene takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper and just before Judas betrays Christ to the high priests and elders. By associating Richard with Christ’s passion in Gethsemane, Buckingham and Richard reveal themselves to the audience as

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<sup>86</sup> The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians 2:4: “Which is an adversarie, and exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he doeth sit as God in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (Geneva Bible 96). Saint Paul is here emphasizing the extent to which Antichrist’s (or the Man of Sin, as he calls him) pretence is an enormous fraud. In the Book of Revelation 13:14, the False Prophet, known as the second beast, is the instrument of deception for the first beast, known as Antichrist (see annotation I 13:4): “And deceived them that dwel on the earth by the signes, which were permitted to him to do in the sight of the beast” (Geneva Bible 119).

<sup>87</sup> The Bishops’ Bible and the Rheims reiterate the Geneva, with the Rheims substituting the phrase “Even so” for “What?” It is not possible to identify here which bible Shakespeare used.

poseurs, blasphemers aping God. Only the Mayor and his company are deceived by the appearance of holiness; the audience is aware of the dichotomy between Richard's outward show and his inward intentions. The pretence is reminiscent, again for the biblically literate audience, of Antichrist (the *man of sinne*) who sits in the temple of God, "shewing himself that he is God" (Geneva 96) in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, the same Antichrist (the beast) in the Book of Revelation 13:1-18, who blasphemes God's "Name and his tabernacle, & them that dwel in heaven," (Geneva 118), while his false prophet, the second beast who comes out of the earth, causes all that dwell on the earth "to worship the first beast" (Geneva 119). It is, perhaps, but an echo; and yet, Richard posing as a holy man, reluctant to assume the crown, while Buckingham, Richard's professed "prophet" (2.2.152), beguiles the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and citizens with a charade of imploring the humble man to do the right thing for the sake of the realm, and take on the burden of the throne, is surely nothing less than a literary similitude. The whole scene is a comic parody of Antichrist and his false prophet.

The use of deception and disguise, a strategy commensurate with Richard's aspiration to deceive others by appearing holy, is expounded by Shakespeare through the theatrical technique of dramatic irony in Act Three when Richard expatiates on that very topic, deception, hypocritically offering a warning against wolves in sheep's clothing to the young prince Edward whom he is welcoming back to London where he secretly plans to imprison him in the tower: "Nor more can you distinguish of a man/Than of his outward show, which, God he knows,/ Seldom or never jumpeth with the heart" (3.1.9-11). Of course, Richard is aware that his unnatural outward appearance, his hunch back, does indeed parallel the ugly malevolence of his inner intentions. This instance of Richard's propensity toward deception once again confirms his resemblance to Antichrist, at least in one of his chief characteristics. In lying to a child, Richard reveals himself to be vile,<sup>88</sup> like the Antichrist figure of Daniel 11:20: "And in his place shal stand up a vile persone, to whome they shal not give the honour of the kingdome: but he shal come in peacably, & obtaine the kingdome by flatteries" (Geneva 364). We are not dealing here with a "certain" biblical allusion, but it may fall under the category of "possible," as Shaheen is equivocal in his

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<sup>88</sup> Richard's deception of the young prince also brings to mind Matthew 18:6-7: "But whosoever shal offende one of the litle ones which beleve in me, it were better for him, that a mylstone were hanged about his necke, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea./Wo be unto the worlde because of offences: so it must nedes be that offences shal come, but wo be to that man, by whome the offence cometh" (Geneva 10).

interpretation of this passage, commenting that it is “perhaps an analogy rather than a reference” (351). Richard is not only acting out the very apothegm he is admonishing the young prince with, but he, and his author, are inviting the audience to partake in a wickedly ironic joke: Richard truly is wicked in conformity with his outward appearance even though he appears, through deception, to be the advocate of virtue. Shaheen compares the passage to 1 Sam. 16.7: “Man looketh on the outwarde appearance, but the Lorde beholdeth the heart” (351).<sup>89</sup> Shakespeare, in imitation of the biblical “Lorde,” through an act of literary omniscience, reveals to the audience the hidden springs of Richard’s heart by showing him acting with deliberate guile, masking his inner malevolence with outward geniality.

Before departing the commentary on Richard’s abuse of Scripture, a strategy in accordance with his aspiration to deceive others by appearing holy, it should be noted that Shaheen points out two other citations in *Richard III* “which exhort men to render good for evil” (343). It is important to compile as many instances as possible of Richard’s predilection for hypocrisy and deception so as to assemble the weight of evidence necessary to assert conclusively that Richard is not just a wicked man, but rather he is a literary image of the biblical Antichrist. The noted citations, namely 1.2.69 and 1.3.315-16, are also most certainly allusions to the aforementioned biblical passages. In the first passage, having intercepted the funeral procession of the saintly Henry VI, a king whom he cruelly murdered, Richard unctuously claims the halo for himself in the face of Anne’s righteous indignation: “Lady, you know no rules of charity,/Which renders good for bad, blessings for curses.” Richard’s accusation reaches a high level of hypocrisy, for not only is he inverting Scripture, but he is using it as a goad to reprimand the virtuous while claiming that title for himself. The last passage cited by Shaheen in this consideration of the “good for evil” allusion issues out of the mouth of Rivers as a sort of naïve encomium on Richard’s assumption of virtue, as evinced by the passage quoted previously on page 14, “a virtuous and Christian-like conclusion—/To pray for them that have done scathe to us” (1.3.315-16). Shakespeare here summarizes Richard’s ability to deceive others with purloined pieces of Scripture. It is a talent that relies either on the naivete or on the good will of less perceptive actors than Richard. Certainly, Richard does not bury his talent; he uses it with great dexterity, and in so doing

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<sup>89</sup> The passage in the Bishops’ Bible is synonymous with the Geneva Bible, and of course the Rheims New Testament is not relevant here.

reveals a prodigious intelligence at the service of an evil will. Richard is continuing his aspiration to assume the role of the masterful hypocrite; indeed, his self-regard depends on such success. With no earthly father alive to whom he can subordinate his ambition, Richard allows his aspirations to ascend beyond the boundaries of his human nature; he wants to be a man without conscience, an arch villain.

One of the chief characteristics of Antichrist, his adroitness as a deceiver, is connected to his rise to power, as made clear in pages twelve to thirteen in the introduction, just as Richard, too, excels in dissimulation and treachery (“As I am subtle, false, and treacherous” 1.1.37) which allows him to obtain the kingdom. Taking pride in his skill at dissimulation, Richard, like Daniel’s “King of fierce countenance” (8:23, Geneva 362), “shall come in peaceably, & obtaine the kingdome by flatteries” (11:21, Geneva 364), and he “shal work disceitfully: for he shal come up, and overcome with a smale people” (11:23, Geneva 364). The editorial gloss to the Geneva Bible (annotation “y”) tells us the identity of the King is Antiochus Epiphanes, a noted Old Testament type of Antichrist, and a figure that Emerson identifies as the “most widely discussed type of Antichrist in the Middle Ages” (28). The gloss describes Antiochus’s nature as “vile, cruel & flattering” (Geneva 364), a description that certainly fits Richard. Furthermore, the same Geneva annotation tells us that Antiochus “defrauded his brothers sonne of the kingdome, & usurped the kingdome without the consent of the people” (Geneva 364). It seems as if Shakespeare is equating the ability to act with the ability to deceive, and the ability to deceive with the ability to ignore or deny one’s own conscience. Antichrist and his types share the trait of master deceiver, and Richard certainly aspires to that role. What they all seem to lack is the ability to foresee the self-destructive consequences of their actions. Every time Richard or Buckingham (or even Rivers) notes Richard’s use of scripture we are reminded of Satan’s failed temptation of Christ in the desert.

Although Shaheen does not think the last line of Richard’s soliloquy at 1.3.323-337, “And seem a saint, when most I play the devil,” is a “reference to a specific Scripture,” he nevertheless, leaning toward the “probable,” provides a comparison to 2 Cor. 11.13-14: “Such false Apostles are deceitful workers, and transforme them selves into the Apostles of Christ, And marveille: for

Satan him selfe is transformed into an Angel of light” (Geneva 86).<sup>90</sup> The annotation in the Geneva Bible, *m*, tells us that by false apostles “is not ment suche as teache false doctrine (which doutles, they wolde have growen unto) but suche as were vaine glorious, and did not their duetie syncerely.” The Rheims annotation, on the other hand, defines false apostles as “a proper term for Heretics that shape themselves into the habit of true teachers, specially by often allegation and commendation of the Scriptures” (365). Because Richard employs Scripture so as to appear as something other than what he truly is, the Rheims gloss provides a better description than the Geneva gloss. Richard is aware of his superior intelligence in manipulating and trapping others, indeed he refers to them as “simple gulls” (1.3.327), and the pride he vaingloriously takes in this superiority is at the root of his theatrical aspiration to play the role of Satan, thereby becoming a *figura* of Antichrist. Richard’s use of deception and disguise to manipulate others, which he says is his habit (and with which he clothes his “naked villainy” 1.3.335), his bold embrace of hypocrisy (which is implied in his questioning of Buckingham: “canst thou quake and change thy colour” 3.5.1), is situated by Shakespeare in the biblical model of the false Apostles who, in turn, as already quoted in 2 Corinthians 11:13-14, mirror Satan in his pretence as an Angel of light. The contention here is given the shade of certitude by Richard’s own admission that he appropriates Scripture for his own wicked ends, and that he seems “a saint, when most I play the devil” (1.3.337). Again, the biblical allusion contains an implicit warning of Richard’s impending destruction.

## 2.6 Richard’s Arrogation of God-like Powers

Having considered the first two of Richard’s noted aspirations, to play the devil and to deceive others as to his moral state, it is time now to consider his third aspiration, that is, to exercise God-like power. For example, we can see that Shakespeare’s protagonist at times means to imitate Christ, but not in the usual manner of imitating his virtues; rather, he aspires to arrogate to himself a godly power over his fellow creatures. John’s gospel states clearly that ‘the Father judgeth no man, but hathe committed all judgement unto the Sonne” (John 5:22, Geneva 45). Richard means to imitate the judicial prerogatives of the Son of God, but paradoxically he means

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<sup>90</sup> The Bishops’ Bible has substantially the same passage, while the Rheims substitutes “crafty” for “deceitful” workers, and “transfiguring” for “transforme” (365). Consequently, if one accepts Shaheen’s comparison, it is impossible to determine which Bible inspired Shakespeare on this occasion.



to do so employing methods more akin to Christ's adversary, the arch hypocrite and deceiver Antichrist:

I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl.  
 The secret mischiefs that I set abroad  
 I lay unto the grievous charge of others.  
 Clarence, whom I indeed have cast in darkness,  
 I do beweepe to many simple gulls—  
 Namely, to Derby, Hastings, Buckingham—  
 And tell them 'tis the Queen and her allies. (1.3.323-329)

Richard's stated method of deception and dissimulation to hide his illicit desire to play God, by casting his fellow creatures into darkness, has more in common with God's enemy who, according to the Gospel of John, is the primary subject of God's judgement: "Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince [Satan] of this world be cast out" (John, 12:31, Geneva 49). The irony here, for Shakespeare's biblically literate audience, would be that Richard's attempt to usurp a judicial prerogative of Christ, that is to cast a creature into darkness, imitating the devil's hatred of mankind, and so aligning himself with the final human adversary of Christ, paradoxically brings him under the judgement of Christ; and so, Richard will also be cast into darkness. Expanding on the previous discussion of Richard's claim to the divine judicial prerogative on page five of this chapter and retaining the same essential interpretation, but this time referring to the synoptic Gospel of Matthew, it is useful to reiterate that Shakespeare's biblical reference resides in the line "Clarence, whom I indeed have cast in darkness," a line that Shaheen compares to Matthew 8:12: "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness" (343),<sup>91</sup> a passage that follows Christ's praise of the Centurion's faith in his power to heal his servant, and an admonition to those in Israel who lacked faith in him, so implying his godhood. Shaheen also mentions Matthew 22:13: "Cast him unto utter darkness" (Geneva 12), a phrase that is repeated in all three bibles.<sup>92</sup> The reference is to Christ's parable about the marriage of a king's son, whose invitations are scorned by the chosen guests (i.e., Israel, or the

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<sup>91</sup> The Bishops' Bible repeats the same words (490), whereas the Rheims has "exterior darkness" (14). The variation is insignificant given that all three Bibles include the words "cast" and "darkness."

<sup>92</sup> As well, the final passage mentioned by Shaheen at Matthew 25:30, "cast therefore that unprofitable servant into utter darkness" (Geneva 14), is substantially the same in all three bibles, and it is therefore impossible to determine which bible Shakespeare used.

“Jewes” as the Geneva Bible gloss “a” explains). Angered by such impudent rejection, those on the highways, both good and bad, are invited instead (i.e., the gentiles who will make up Christ’s Church, as adverted to in the Geneva Bible gloss “d”). But one of the guests, lacking a wedding garment, is spotted by the King at the ceremony, and he is bound and cast into the darkness. Christ is here talking about the prerogative of God, and he is identifying himself as the son of the King, God the Father. Once again, Shakespeare tightens the theatrical irony already residing in Richard’s fraud by associating his pretence with the “king” of Christ’s parable, a figure of God. Richard arrogates to himself the role of the just judge who casts the wicked servant into utter darkness, where “there shalbe weping and gnassing of teeth” (Geneva 14), even though he and the audience are well aware that he is himself the wicked servant. In imitation of the final usurper, Antichrist, Richard assumes, through language, the mantle of Christ the judge when he reflects upon his murder of Clarence and how he has deceived others. Those who recognize this allusion will recognize that Richard has raised himself up to equal God in an act of self-idolatry such as is always punished throughout the Bible.

## 2.7 The Abomination of Desolation

In the same vein, that is, in the exploration of the meaning of Richard’s idolatry, his aspiration to arrogate God’s powers to himself, one of Margaret’s expressions, “That foul defacer of God’s handiwork” (4.4.51), deserves closer scrutiny as its investigation beyond the confines of Shaheen’s “certain” identification of biblical allusions bears fruit for this chapter’s association of Richard with the figure of Antichrist. First, it must be understood that Richard’s idolatry consists in exalting himself against those who trust in God, for example, as when he gloats over his seduction of Anne. This type of self-exaltation parallels that of the *man of sinne*, Antichrist, as described by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:4: “and exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he doeth sit as God in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (Geneva 96). The implication here is that Richard, as an imitator of Antichrist, desires to exercise god-like powers, but to accomplish this goal he must prove his successful defiance of God; and that, in imitation once again of Antichrist, can be achieved by desecrating God’s holy temple, the work of God’s hands, his handiwork. Shaheen’s identification of Margaret’s allusion to Isaiah leads us to other biblical passages that, like Isaiah’s, refer to the destruction or threatened destruction of the temple, including Christ’s reinterpretation of the temple as his

human body. These biblical passages are the ones upon which medieval exegetes build their conception of the Antichrist. Margaret's Isaiah allusion then serves to link Richard to Antichrist. The passage in question occurs during Margaret's recriminatory commiseration with the Duchess of York and Queen Elizabeth in Act Four, in which she labels the Duchess' womb a kennel responsible for birthing the hellhound, Richard, "that dog, that had his teeth before his eyes,/To worry lambs and lap their gentle blood" (4.4.48-49), before describing him as "That foul defacer of God's handiwork" (4.4.51). Shaheen takes aim at the phrase "God's handiwork" and finds an abundance of biblical references beginning with Isaiah 64.8 (355). Here is the larger passage at Isaiah 64:6-11, not given by Shaheen, from which it comes:

But we have all bene as an uncleane thing & all our rightousnes is a filthy cloutes, and we all do fade like a leafe, and our iniquities like the winde have taken us away.

And there is none that stirreth up himself to take holde of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hath consumed us because of our iniquities.

But now, o Lord, thou art our Father: we are the claye, and thou art our potter, & we are all the work of thine hands.

Be not angrie, o lord, above measure, nether remember iniquitie forever: lo, we beseche thee beholde, we are all thy people.

Thine holie cities lye waste: Zion is a wilderness, & Jerusalem a desert.

The House of our Sanctuarie & of our glorie, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fyre, and all our pleasant things are wasted. (Geneva 304-305)<sup>93</sup>

Because this allusion bears enormous weight for the identification of Richard as a *figura* of Antichrist, it is necessary for the sake of this chapter's argument to fully trace out the lineaments of the meaning contained in the biblical allusion, exploring a chain of associations so as to arrive at a stronger reading. Of signal importance in this passage from Isaiah are the lines, "all our righteousness is a filthy cloutes"; "for thou hast hid thy face from us"; and, "we are all the work of thine hands." Such phrases attest to the origin of Shakespeare's "foul defacer of God's handiwork," based on the forensic word evidence alone: for there is a similitude between "foul" and "filthy," between "hid thy face" and "defacer," between "work of thine hands" and "God's

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<sup>93</sup> Other than some minor variations in phrasing and some alternative words such as "sin" for "iniquity," and "ragges" for "cloutes," the passage in the Bishops' Bible is substantially the same as that found in the Geneva.

handiwork.” Isaiah goes on to say that God’s handiwork (“the work of thine hands”) praises, or worships, its Creator in a “Sanctuarie” or temple, presumably built by human hands, that has been burnt up, wasted, or made desolate. According to the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, “the temple in its most basic sense symbolizes the dwelling place of God. This is underscored by numerous references to the ‘house of God’ or the ‘house of the Lord.’ Its other titles include ‘sanctuary’” (849). The connection between the work of God’s hands, God’s handiwork, that is to say, the human being, and the Sanctuary or temple where humans worship God is here germinal, but nevertheless explicit, and has a profound bearing on this chapter’s argument. Following the elucidation of Shaheen’s identification of Isaiah with Shakespeare’s “foul defacer of God’s handiwork” is my close reading of some of the more salient biblical passages on the concept of the temple and its desecration as found in the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of John, the Book of Daniel, the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, and Revelation. The basis for this close reading is founded in part on the biblical exegesis of the early Church Fathers such as that found in Tertullian’s *Against Marcion*, in which the author declares that “future events [in scripture] are sometimes announced as if they were already passed. . . that very many events are figuratively predicted by means of enigmas and allegories and parables” (324). The series of words, ideas, or images in Isaiah’s last two lines bring to mind Christ’s prophecy of the destruction of God’s sanctuary in Matthew 24:15-16:

And Jesus went out, & departed from the Temple, and his disciples came to him, to shewe him the building of the Temple.

And Jesus said unto them, Se ye not all these things? Verely I say unto you, there shal not be here left a stone upon a stone that shal not be caste downe . . .

And manie false prophetes shal arise & shal deceive manie

And because iniquitie shal be increased, the love of manie shalbe colde . . .

When ye therefore shal se the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, standing in the holie place. (Geneva 13-14)

Here we have, in Christ’s prophesy of the desecration of the “holie place,” a very similar description of the “Sanctuarie” or temple being made desolate because of iniquity, God’s presence or “love” withdrawn (“shalbe colde”), the Temple desecrated, or laid waste by the “Abomination of Desolation.” As in Isaiah, where iniquity in the human creature pollutes the

divine worship, so in Matthew iniquity is equated with the Abomination of Desolation that pollutes the Temple of God at the end of ages. The idea put simply is that sin, or iniquity, defaces the work of God's hands to such an extent that the worship of God in the Sanctuary built with human hands is defiled. Iniquity defaces God's handiwork by marring, or obscuring, the image and likeness of God imprinted on the human being by the Creator. The image and likeness of God from the Christian perspective is Jesus Christ. Sin, which originates with the devil, finds its perfect embodiment at the end of history in Antichrist who is the image and likeness of Satan.

The New Testament purports to be a manifestation of that which was promised or hidden in the Old Testament, and this is known to theologians and literary critics of the Bible as the rhetorical language of typology succinctly summarized by Northrop Frye in *The Great Code*:

The general principle of interpretation is traditionally given as 'In the Old Testament the New Testament is concealed; in the New Testament the Old Testament is revealed.' Everything that happens in the Old Testament is a 'type' or adumbration of something that happens in the New Testament, and the whole subject is therefore called typology, though it is typology in a special sense. Paul speaks in Romans 5:14 of Adam as *typos* of Christ; the Vulgate renders *typos* here as 'forma,' but the AV's 'figure' reflects the fact that 'figura' had come to be the standard Latin equivalent of *typos*. (79)

Applying Frye's synopsis of typology to the concept of "temple" in the New Testament, coupled with the insight that the word itself becomes a metaphor for a new Christian understanding: "As each body is a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16)" (Frye 157); the meaning of Margaret's vituperation assumes biblical profundity. Additionally, in the Gospel of John the meaning of God's Temple is revealed as not just a physical building but a living temple. In John 2:19-21, the sanctuary or Temple of God takes on a meaning that is commensurate with the meaning referenced in Margaret's recrimination of Richard at his murder of the innocent princes in the Tower, that is, that the handiwork or Temple of God is the human body:

Jesus answered the Jewes, and said unto them, Destroye this temple, and in thre days I wil raise it up againe.

Then said the Jewes, Fortie and six years was this Temple a buylding, and wilt thou reare it up in thre days?

But he spake of the temple of his bodie. (Geneva 43)

What was spoken of by Isaiah in 64:6-11 is reiterated by Daniel<sup>94</sup> (as noted by Matthew in the quotation just above from 24:15-16) at 9:16-17:

O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy wrath be turned away from thy citie Jerusalem thine holy Mountaine: for because of our sinnes, & for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are a reproche to all that are about us.

Now therefore, o our God, heare the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy Sanctuarie, that lyeth waste for the Lords sake. (Geneva 362)

And a little later, at Daniel 9:27, a mysterious figure appears in conjunction with the Abomination of Desolation:

And he confirme the covenant with manie for one weke: and in the middes of the weke he shal cause the sacrifice and the oblacion to cease, and for the overspreading of the abominacions, he shal make it desolate, even until the consummacion determined shalbe powred upon the desolate. (Geneva 363)

Again, at Daniel 11:31, a mysterious figure once more threatens to deface “God’s handiwork”:

And armes shal stand on his parte, and thei shal pollute the Sanctuarie of strength, & shal take away the dailie sacrifice, & they shal set up the abominable desolation. (Geneva 364)

The defilement of the holy sanctuary at the hands of an obscure and malevolent figure is also spoken of by Paul in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, a passage that according to Frye is

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<sup>94</sup> Emerson argues that Daniel is the most important Old Testament book with reference to the Abomination of Desolation because Christ in the New Testament makes reference to Daniel when speaking of the end times to his inquiring Apostles: “Exegetes interpreted Christ’s warning of the ‘abomination of desolation’ (verse 15), which refers explicitly to Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11, by noting how Antichrist’s type, Antiochus Epiphanes, polluted the temple at Jerusalem (1 Macc. 1:57-60), and by explaining how in the last days Antichrist will similarly pollute the temple by rebuilding it and then erecting an image of himself that he will force his converts to worship. . . . These time prophecies are set forth especially in the book of Daniel, the most important Old Testament source of the Antichrist tradition” (42-43).

“clearly derived from Daniel’s ‘abomination’” (95), in a warning to Christians as to what will precede the Second Coming of Jesus Christ at the end of time:

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shal not come, except there come a departing first, and that that man of sinne be disclosed, even the sonne of perdition.

Which is an adversarie, and exalteth him self against all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he doeth sit as God in the Temple of God, shewing him self that he is God (2 Thess. 2:3-4, Geneva 96).

Finally, a similar character, cognate with Paul’s *man of sinne* because he is a usurper, a deceiver, and a defiler of God’s temple, appears as the beast of Revelation whose career, enabled by the dragon, is devoted to profanation of God’s handiwork and usurpation of His throne:

And he opened his mouth unto blasphemie against God, to blaspheme his Name and his tabernacle, & them that dwel in heaven. (Rev. 13:6, Geneva 118)

To act in such a manner is tantamount to deicide, for blasphemy on such a scale represents an attempt to desacralize the Holy of Holies (i.e. tabernacle), the dwelling place of God. It is to deny the reality of God as omnipotent Creator. As Jeffrey says, in his *Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, in the New Testament blasphemy “clearly involves laying claim to divine authority or prerogative (e.g. to forgive sins), so violating God’s unapproachable and infinite majesty” (92). Furthermore, Jeffrey states, the “patristic definition of blasphemy as falsehood and the various biblical instances of blasphemy ‘strictly speaking’ were systematically conceptualized by Thomas Aquinas. . . For Aquinas blasphemy was language which unjustly insults God by radically misrepresenting his nature, either by asserting something which does not conform to his nature (also denying what does) or by attributing to a ‘creature’ something which uniquely characterizes God” (92). According to Jeffrey, the Old Testament view of blasphemy was that the “unnecessary pronunciation of God’s sacred name (Yahweh) was itself a great sacrilege” (92). Blasphemy on the scale of the beast of Revelation is nothing short of a “great sacrilege” and is associated by biblical exegetes with the Abomination of Desolation because, as the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, states, “from the biblical perspective an abomination callously disregards and actively disdains the values God has established” (2).

As for the identity of “the beast,” an annotation in the Geneva Bible (“I”) makes it clear that the editors identify the beast with Antichrist: “Antichrist’s time & power is limited” (118). As well, the editors tie the coming of the beast of Revelation to Paul’s *man of sinne* in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians 2:3, the *sonne of perdition* who is preceded by a “departing” from the faith: “he meaneth the universal departing whereof S Paul speaketh to the Thessalonians” (annotation “1,” Geneva 118). Bearing in mind Beauregard’s assertion that Shakespeare may very well have had access to the Rheims New Testament by way of Fulke’s translation,<sup>95</sup> annotation “4” to the Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians in the Rheims version contains language that verifies the interpretation presented in this chapter of Margaret’s recrimination of Richard as “That foul defacer of God’s handiwork” (4.4.51):

The great Antichrist which must come near the worlds end, shall abolish the public exercise of all other religions true and false, and pull down both the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, wherein consisteth specially the worship of the true God, and also all idols of the Gentiles, and sacrifices of the Jews, generally all kind of religious worship, saving that which must be done to himself alone . . . For it is here said that he shall sit in the Temple as God. That is, he shall be adored there by sacrifice and divine honor, the name and worship of the true God wholly defaced. And this they think to be the *abomination of desolation* foretold by Daniel, mentioned by our Saviour, prefigured and resembled by Antiochus and others, that defaced the worship of the true God by profanation of that Temple, specially by abrogating the daily sacrifice, which was a figure of the only sacrifice and continual oblation of Christ’s holy body and blood in the Church, as the abolishing of that, was a figure of the abolishing of this, which shall be done principally and most universally by Antichrist himself. (Rheims 418-419)

It is significant that Antichrist’s profanation of the worship of God is described by the compilers of the Rheims version with the word “defaced” more than once. Again, what is presented here is substantial word evidence from the extant biblical texts compared with the text of Shakespeare’s play. It would seem, then, that Margaret’s vituperation against Richard is more than just vitriol

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<sup>95</sup> See page 17 of this chapter.



spit out at the mother of “that excellent grand tyrant of the earth” (4.4.53);<sup>96</sup> it is a reproach pregnant with biblical meaning the significance of which is opened up initially by Shaheen.<sup>97</sup> Careful consideration of Isaiah 64:8 and the surrounding text unfolds the depths of Margaret’s vilification of Richard as “that foul defacer of God’s handiwork” (4.4.51). His foul defacing of God’s handiwork becomes, through an exegesis of the biblical connections, a reference to Richard’s association with the figure of Antichrist, who also defiles God’s Temple. Margaret’s accusation is a pivotal phrase because it confirms Richard’s identification as a *figura* of Antichrist.<sup>98</sup>

## 2.8 The Bloody Tyrant

The idea that Richard, in his imitation of the devil, thereby represents a *figura* of Antichrist, is given additional credence when one considers Shaheen’s identification of a “certain” biblical reference in the Duchess of York’s despairing words to Margaret and Elizabeth in Act 4, Scene 4, bemoaning the incarceration, and probable murder, of the young princes in the Tower:

Dead life, blind sight, poor mortal-living ghost,  
Woe’s scene, world’s shame, grave’s due by life usurped,

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<sup>96</sup> Emerson gives a good instance of how the future tyranny of Antichrist came to be associated with historical tyranny, especially under the Roman Caesars: “Since commentators accuse Nero of killing the apostles, persecuting the church, and doing the works of the devil—‘his father’—his persecution is a figure of the much greater persecution to come under Antichrist. Early in the tradition this typological identification of Nero and Antichrist fused with the *Nero redivivus* legend, the belief that Nero himself would return as a great tyrant” (28).

<sup>97</sup> The rest of the references cited by Shaheen support the passage from Isaiah 64:8, and are substantially the same in the Bishops’ Bible.

<sup>98</sup> Emerson gives an excellent summation of the medieval theologian Bonaventure’s conception of the figures of Antichrist: “Perhaps the most thoroughly developed and profound statement of the forerunners of Antichrist is Bonaventure’s detailed explanation of the distinction between Antichrist and Christ in the *Collationes in hexaemeron*. In the fourteenth collation, Bonaventure explains how the scriptures contain twelve ‘mysteries’ from Genesis to the Apocalypse, and how Christ is symbolized in these mysteries by figures throughout scripture. Similarly, Bonaventure notes in the fifteenth collation, Antichrist is also represented throughout scripture in each of the twelve mysteries. His forerunners include Lamech, the first bigamist; Nemrod, the builder of Babel and symbol of Antichrist’s pride; Balaam, the hypocrite and false advisor; and the rapacious Achan, Goliath, and Judas. The other forerunners include many of the types and symbols commonly discussed in the Antichrist tradition. . . According to Bonaventure, Antichrist will be like both the impudent king of Daniel 8:23 and the beast that rises from the abyss (Apoc. 11:7). The most common types of Antichrist in medieval exegesis—Antiochus and Simon Magus—also represent the pseudo-Christ. In the ninth mystery Antiochus, the tyrant who trampled the law of the Jews, symbolizes Antichrist as a prince., for ‘he will be a destroyer of the Evangelical Law and a killer of Christians.’ In the eleventh mystery, the ‘diffusion of charismatic gifts,’ Simon Magus represents Antichrist. Simon sought to buy the Holy Spirit, pretended to fly, and worked wonders with diabolic aid; similarly, Antichrist ‘will be the worst liar; he will come with deceitful signs and prodigies.

Brief abstract and record of tedious days,  
Rest thy unrest on England's lawful earth,

*Sits down*

Unlawfully made drunk with innocents' blood! (4.4.25-30)

The first thing that Shaheen notes is the similarity of words in the line “unlawfully made drunk with innocents' blood!” with Rev. 17:6: “drunken with the blood of Saintes & with the blood of the Martyrs of Jesus” (Geneva 120).<sup>99</sup> John is here writing about the woman who sits upon a “skarlat coloured beast” (Rev. 17:3, Geneva 120). It is this woman, “the great whore” (Rev. 17:1, Geneva 120), who is drunken with the blood of her victims. The Geneva gloss “f” identifies the whore as the Antichrist. At Rev. 17:18, we learn that “the woman which thou sawest, is the great citie, which reigneth over the Kings of the earth” (Geneva 120). Of course, this passage makes sense because earlier at Rev. 17:5 it was revealed “in her forehead was a name written, A Mystery, great Babylon, the mother of whoredomes, and abominations of the earth” (Geneva 120). The Geneva Bible, in annotation “a,” identifies the “great whore” with Antichrist (as does Rheims 557) “because he seduceth the worlde with vaine words, doctrines of lies, & outwarde appearance” (Geneva 120). The reference associates Richard, who has “unlawfully made [England] drunk with innocents' blood,” with Antichrist who, as head of the body of the wicked, is “drunken with the blood of Saintes & with the blood of the Martyrs of Jesus.”

Once again, a “certain” biblical reference identified by Shaheen supports the central idea that Richard is a *figura* of Antichrist. In other words, according to the Duchess of York, England, now a type of Babylon, has been “made drunk with innocents' blood” by the crimes of Richard, a counterpart of Antichrist, who must, as was known by the historical record, suffer sudden and irreparable defeat like his biblical counterpart.

The unlawfully shed blood of the innocent referred to in the Duchess of York's lamentation points forward to the apotheosis of all human predators, the first beast of Revelation, in Elizabeth's later accusation against Richard in 4.4:

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<sup>99</sup> The Bishops' Bible reduces the line to “drunken with the blood of the martirs of Jesus” (Bishops' 637), while the Rheims, like the Geneva, has both “saints” and “martyrs” (Rheims 556). The words “martyr” and “saint” seem to be conflated in the Bishops' Bible then, but the difference in meaning is negligible considering they both bleed because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Once again, it is not possible to determine which bible Shakespeare used.

Hid'st thou that forehead with a golden crown  
 Where should be branded, if that right were right,  
 The slaughter of the prince that owed that crown  
 And the dire death of my poor sons and brothers?  
 Tell me, thou villain-slave, where are my children? (4.4.140—144)

Shaheen (355) links the passage to Genesis 4:15, “And the Lord set a mark upon Cain” (Geneva 2, Bishops’ Bible 8). Shaheen includes the annotation, “A visible signe of Gods judgement that others shulde feare” (Geneva 2). The mark also points to the Book of Revelation, as Shaheen suggests in a reference to Rev. 14:9: “. . . If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or on his hand . . .”; and to Rev. 20:4: “. . . and I sawe the soules of them, that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the worde of God, & which did not worship the beast, nether his image, nether had taken his marke upon their foreheads, or on their hands . . .” (Geneva 121). The brand that Elizabeth thinks Richard deserves is identified by biblical reference to the mark of Cain, and Cain, the first murderer, according to Emerson, was in medieval exegesis a “figural representative of Antichrist” (20). By typological interpretation, because Cain is a *figura* of Antichrist, Cain’s mark can be viewed as an antetype of the “mark of the beast,” Antichrist’s number branded on the right hand or forehead of all his followers, the 666 spoken of in Revelation 13:16. Shakespeare’s use of allusion in this instance conforms to the biblical exemplar in that it bears meaning both on past, present and future events. For the biblically aware audience, Richard, like Antichrist, conceals his crimes behind the guise of authority,<sup>100</sup> the crown. The audience has witnessed Richard’s rise to power as he wades through the blood of his many victims; and they have witnessed his ruthless determination to secure the throne by murdering his nephews; and they know Richard’s future, like Antichrist’s, is to be cast into the abyss.

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<sup>100</sup> Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* gives a good description of Antichrist’s hypocritical mask of authority: “This word [Titan], too, contains a certain outward appearance of vengeance, and of one inflicting punishment because he (Antichrist) pretends that he vindicates the oppressed. And besides this, it is an ancient name, one worthy of credit, of royal dignity, and still further a name belonging to a tyrant” (559). From Irenaeus’ description of a possible name of Antichrist (derived from the numbers 666), it can be seen that he will be a monarchical tyrant who destroys his opponents under the pretence of justice, a mask that Richard also assumes in his murder of Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan at 3.3, and also Hastings at 3.4.

## 2.9 Avenge me of mine adversary (Luke 18:3)

The final biblical allusion to appear in *Richard III* is, in Shaheen's opinion, "certain" (358). The reference occurs in Richmond's last speech to his soldiers before encountering the tyrant, Richard, on the field at Bosworth: "The prayers of holy saints and wronged souls,/Like high-reared bulwarks, stand before our faces" (5.3.241-42). It is such an important passage for the full understanding of the mythological structure of the play, a mythological structure tantamount to the apocalyptic career of Antichrist, a structure that rests on the character of Richard, and of his final destiny, that it should be considered in its complete form. The dramatic character of Richard can only be fully understood in its teleological sense, as fully revealed by Richmond in an oration to his soldiers aimed at establishing the justice of their cause as agents of good against evil, just before the final battle on Bosworth field:

God and our good cause fight upon our side;  
 The prayers of holy saints and wronged souls,  
 Like high-reared bulwarks, stand before our faces.  
 Richard except, those whom we fight against  
 Had rather have us win than him they follow.  
 For what is he they follow? Truly, gentlemen,  
 A bloody tyrant and a homicide;  
 One raised in blood and one in blood established;  
 One that made means to come by what he hath,  
 And slaughtered those that were the means to help him;  
 A base foul stone, made precious by the foil  
 Of England's chair, where he is falsely set;  
 One that hath ever been God's enemy.  
 Then if you fight against God's enemy,  
 God will in justice ward you as his soldiers. (5.3.241-55)

Who are the wronged souls, who the slaughtered, if not Clarence, Rivers, Grey, Vaughan, Edward and his little brother the Duke of York, Anne, Hastings, and Buckingham?<sup>101</sup> Shaheen

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<sup>101</sup> Hassel suggests that Richard's victims are analogous to the victims of Antichrist in Revelation: "Like the Messiah in Revelation, he counts among his allies not only God but "good Angels," invoked by the ghosts of Buckingham,

locates the allusion (358-359) in Rev. 6.9-10: “I saw . . . the soules of them, that were killed for the worde of God . . . And they cryed with a lowde voyce, saying, How long, Lord, . . . doest not thou judge & avenge our blood?” (Geneva 116)<sup>102</sup> as well as in Revelation 5:8: “The prayers of the Saints” (Geneva 116).<sup>103</sup> It is true that Richmond’s speech does not constitute an objective evaluation of Richard, in other words, it is self-serving; but, given that Richard has described himself previously in the play as a homicidal villain, as have his victims, it is not without merit as a description of the truth. In as much as Richard embodies the evil of error, and Richmond is a manifestation of the goodness of truth, Shakespeare’s drama ends in an analogous mode to the Bible’s denouement, the defeat of the wicked by the righteous.

The first allusion to Revelation that Shaheen identifies in Richmond’s speech to his soldiers occurs in the Bible at the opening of the six seals by the Lamb [Christ] as witnessed by the seer, John of Patmos, author of the Apocalypse. When the fifth seal is opened, John reports that he saw “under the altar the soules of them that were killed for the worde of God, & for the testimonie which they maintained” (Geneva 116). The Geneva gloss, “I,” gives the meaning of the fifth seal as signifying “the continual persecution of the Church.” Then follows the actual allusion identified by Shaheen: “And they cryed with a lowed voice, saying, How long, Lord, holie and true! doest not thou judge & avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev. 6:10). Immediately after this passage, we learn that the victims of God’s adversaries should “rest for a litel ceason until their felowe servants, and their brethren that shulde be killed even as they were, were fulfilled” (Geneva 116). So as to clarify the meaning of the further victims mentioned in Revelation 6:11, “their brethren that shulde be killed,” it is appropriate to turn now to the *Rheims New Testament*, as the *Geneva Bible* does not contain any gloss on this passage. The Rheims annotation explains that “there is a certain number that God hath ordained to die for the testimony of truth and the Catholic faith, for conformity of the members to the head CHRIST our chief Martyr. And till that number be accomplished, the general condemnation of the wicked

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Clarence, and the two princes. ‘The Prayers of holy Saints and wronged soules’ (1.3707) are also among his impressive supernatural forces” (p. 34). Hassel’s argument seems to imply that Richard’s victims are “members of Christ”: “According to the *Geneva* ‘Argument,’ on this last day ‘the hypocrites which sting like scorpions the members of Christ, shalbe destroyed.’ Richard, in all his devilish splendor, is an impressive antichrist to Richmond’s avenging Messiah” (p. 35).

<sup>102</sup> Bishops’ and Rheims are substantially the same, leaving no clues to identify the Bible that Shakespeare used.

<sup>103</sup> Bishops’ and Rheims again are substantially the same, with the same result as above.

persecutors shall not come, nor the general reward of the elect” (544). When the Rheims annotation is examined, and compared to the previously mentioned Geneva gloss, it becomes clear that the victims under the altar are all those who have been killed by the precursors of Antichrist, and those that “shulde be killed” are those who will be killed by Antichrist himself. The reasoning for this is simple enough; since Christ’s martyrdom on the cross there have been many martyrdoms that followed such as those of the Apostles, and those victims of the mass persecutions under the tyrannical Caesars such as Nero and Diocletian. As well, the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* states that Jesus Christ himself included all those who died in God’s cause prior to his coming: “Upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah (Mt. 23:35 RSV)” (DBI 540). None of the above martyrs cited were killed by Antichrist, since his appearance is at the end of the world, but rather they were martyred by precursors of Antichrist, tyrants, opponents of God. Recalling, then, the argument put forth here that Richard is a literary *figura* of Antichrist, as signified by an analysis of Shakespeare’s many allusions to that biblical tyrant, the meaning of Richmond’s oration to his soldiers is revealed. Plainly then, Richmond is made to identify the villain-king’s victims with the victims of Antichrist in Revelation, and he does so through allusion. The blood that Richmond refers to is the blood of the “slaughtered” that he also refers to; since these were “slaughtered,” he must be adverting to Hastings and Buckingham. Furthermore, since Richmond declares he is on the side of God, and since Richard’s victims are on Richmond’s side, as evidenced by the apparitions, and since the dream visitations represent some level of reality, Richmond represents Richard’s victims as on the side of God.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, those whom Richmond puts on the side of God after they have spilled their life blood as victims of a “bloody tyrant,” indeed “God’s enemy,” can logically be assumed to be the “wronged souls” that Richmond adverts to. Richmond’s identification of Richard’s victims with the biblical martyrs although obviously not a direct parallel, given the general character of Richard’s prey, is more significant in its function as a marker pointing in Richmond’s rhetoric to an important aspect of Richard’s character, namely his similarity to the apocalyptic monster dreaded by

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<sup>104</sup> Battenhouse argues that Richard may be, inadvertently, the efficient cause of the salvation of his victims: “They are indeed ‘wronged souls’, but some readers may wonder why any of them can be called holy or saintly. Is it perhaps because each has had a contrite state of heart when dying? . . . Since all these souls now pray for England’s deliverance from evil, we may infer that this good will in them has come about through a conversion. Evidently, Richard’s evil has been used by Providence to elicit a goodness in these victims” (230).

Christians. And what is more, Richmond represents himself as Christ, or at the very least Christ's agent Michael the archangel, in as much as he sets out to defeat "the enemy of God," and in as much as he portrays himself as the opposite of Richard, the minister of hell. Almost as if in response to the biblical allusion to the cry of the martyrs under the altar, Shaheen identifies a "certain," or highly "probable," biblical allusion in 5.3.108 and 113 where Richmond, in a soliloquy rendered just before he falls asleep in his tent on Bosworth field before the day of battle, prays to God: "O thou whose captain I account myself, . . . Make us thy ministers of chastisement." According to Shaheen, the passage refers to Romans 13:4: "for he is the minister of God to take vengeance on him that doth evil" (Geneva 75).<sup>105</sup> Contained in the passage is a reference to "th'usurping helmets of our adversaries" a phrase that is suggestive of two paramount characteristics of Antichrist, usurpation of, and opposition to, Christ:

O Thou, whose captain I account myself,  
 Look on my forces with a gracious eye;  
 Put in their hands Thy bruising irons of wrath,  
 That they may crush down with a heavy fall  
 Th'usurping helmets of our adversaries;  
 Make us Thy ministers of chastisement,  
 That we may praise Thee in the victory.  
 To Thee I do commend my watchful soul  
 Ere I let fall the windows of mine eyes.  
 Sleeping and waking, O defend me still! (5.3.108-118)

Richmond's use of the archaic second person singular pronoun, "thou," signifies that he is addressing God, especially as he is alone, and is retiring to sleep; and, furthermore, the description he gives of his opponents, as "Th'usurping helmets of our adversaries," speaks to their head, Richard, in much the same way that the followers of Antichrist are identified by his chief characteristics: he is a usurper of the throne of Christ, and an adversary of God. So, by contrast Richmond identifies an aspect of Richard's character as conforming to the biblical

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<sup>105</sup> For comparison sake, the Bishops' Bible reads, "for he is the minister of God, revenger of wrath on hym that do evyll" (581). The Rheims New Testament reads, "For he is Gods minister: a revenger unto wrath, to him that doeth evil" (306). Since all the biblical variants read *minister* Shakespeare could have read any of them.

portrayal of ultimate human evil. Here again, the allusion serves as a signal, to the biblically aware, of a destiny that Richard shares with God's final adversary: despair and sudden defeat as implied in Daniel 11:45 ("yet he shal come to his end, & none shal helpe him" Geneva 364). And so, Richard arrives at his final apotheosis, branded with the image of the beast, doomed to destruction, the tyrant king's final act.

## 2.10 Witchcraft and Richard

Having examined the textual evidence for Shakespeare's use of biblical allusions to advert to Antichrist in *Richard III*, it is perhaps pertinent to consider the possible psychological<sup>106</sup> underpinnings of Richard's behavior, particularly his relationship to witchcraft, and how that association offers further links to an Antichrist reading. Initially, the audience perhaps identifies with Richard, with his intellect, his energy, his daring, his humour, his pathos. At the same time, Richard is identified, by way of allusions to biblical texts, with Antichrist (and by extension, with biblical types of personal evil such as Cain, Herod, and Judas),<sup>107</sup> and with the achievement of power, cruelty, fierceness, and defiance. Shakespeare creates ironic distance in his drama by thwarting the trajectory of audience sympathy for Richard through the intervention of biblical allusion pointing to the destiny of God's adversaries, a theatrical tactic that works to elevate the audience's knowledge of Richard's diabolical character.

Just as Richard experiences joy in the contemplation of superior knowledge in comparison to his intended victims, so Shakespeare affords a similar opportunity for the alert witnesses of his drama to enjoy an encompassing perspective on Richard's hunt for the crown, an ironic knowledge concerning the villain's affinity with Antichrist in both his mundane and spiritual destiny, that raises the knower to a horizon commensurate with that of the playwright. Richard assumes he can secure his throne through continued tyranny, which is not unreasonable given his past successes; the historically informed audience knows this to be false, but the biblically

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<sup>106</sup> The psychology of evil was definitely a consideration for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, as confirmed by Armstrong in his paper on Elizabethan tyrants: "The tyrants Richard III and Macbeth, no less than Faustus, mark the advent of that preoccupation with the psychology of evil which is characteristic of the modern age" (181).

<sup>107</sup> Biblical typology reflects the type of analogical relationship posited in this thesis, that is an historical person (and in Shakespeare's plays, a dramatically imagined person) can be viewed as both himself and representing a future person, this is also known in literary criticism as a *figura*. Emerson explains the phenomenon: "As sacred history contains numerous types of Christ—Adam, Abel, Melchizedek, Isaac, David, Solomon—so it also contains numerous types of Antichrist" (25).



informed in the audience who apprehend Shakespeare's allusions know the spiritual significance of Richard's coming doom and its analogous relation to Antichrist's fate. The audience knows Richard better than Richard can ever know himself because his author has given them clues as to the meaning of his character's life and its end, its successes and its failures. Shakespeare has placed Richard in the biblical context of Antichrist; and so, Richard's stage life takes on an eschatological character that transcends the particular, historical facts. Richard seeks "the father" in the crown, but it is not God the Father that he looks to. In wooing Lady Anne, and attempting to gain her sympathy, Richard reveals, in a finely wrought poetic image, the deep grief, unexpressed, at the cruel death of his father, a suppressed grief that may be the source of his demonic aspirations:

Nor when thy warlike father, like a child,  
Told the sad story of my father's death  
And twenty times made pause to sob and weep,  
That all the standers-by had wet their cheeks  
Like trees bedashed with rain—in that sad time  
My manly eyes did scorn an humble tear. (1.2. 159-164)

Although Richard is appealing to Anne's sympathy, and perhaps to her ear for poetic imagery in order to seduce her, and although he admits later that he has been merely toying with her (e.g., "I'll have her, but I will not keep her long" (1.2.229)), the reference to his father is likely sincere given later pronouncements. As well as suppressed grief at his father's death, genuine admiration for his father is evident in Richard's response to Queen Margaret's accusations in Act 1, Scene 3. Margaret would transfer her sorrows to Richard, to whom they rightfully belong. As well, she accuses him of usurping all her pleasures, to which Richard responds with the vehement rebuttal: "The curse my noble father laid on thee/When thou didst crown his warlike brows with paper/And with thy scorns drew'st rivers from his eyes" (1.3.173-175), reproaching Margaret for her cruel and homicidal treatment of his father. In as much as psychology deals with the causes of behavior, it is not beyond the purview of this present analysis to include the effect of witchcraft on Richard in the play. Even though it does not play as large a role in *Richard III* as in *Macbeth*, witchcraft is present in the earlier play; it exists in the curses articulated by the embittered Queen Margaret. As Mary Steible argues in her paper "Jane Shore and the Politics of

Cursing,” Margaret’s curses “not only subvert a standard or norm, but they also reflexively call attention to . . . Margaret as witch-like and, thus, subversive” (3). Richard himself alerts the audience to Margaret’s role, calling her a “foul wrinkled witch” (1.3.163), and warning her to “have done thy charm, thou hateful withered hag!” (1.3.214). Margaret’s curses are thought to be prophetic by Rivers, Grey and Vaughan (3.3.14), by Hastings (3.4.92) and by Buckingham (5.1.27), facing their unexpected deaths. But her curses have more the note of illicit divination, an action proscribed by divine law;<sup>108</sup> Margaret’s curses bespeak vengeance, thereby arrogating to herself God’s prerogative: “Vengeance and recompense are mine” (Deut. 32:35, Geneva 95). As discussed in the introduction, witchcraft is associated with Antichrist because it is a sign of apostasy and apostasy, according to Paul in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, is said to precede the advent of Antichrist. Margaret is to Richard what witchcraft, as apostasy, is to Antichrist. Anne’s seemingly rhetorical question on being stopped by Richard during the funeral procession for her father-in-law, King Henry VI, that is, “what black magician conjures up this fiend,” (1.2.34), is a cryptic reference to Margaret as the murderer of Richard’s father, the recipient of his father’s curse, and now the withered hag who conjures up the fiend in Richard. Richard P. Wheeler asserts a very similar view of Margaret as black magician in his paper “History, Character and Conscience in ‘Richard III,’” and in fact he goes a step further suggesting an apostatic quality to her role:

Margaret finds the same cruel delight in her bloodthirsty success that Richard does. Margaret’s purpose conforms to a divine end, but her presence suggests what [Mircea] Eliade describes as the ‘magico-religious paraphernalia’ of ‘hybrid forms of black magic and sheer travesty of religion,’ steps in the ‘process of the desacralization of human existence’ [The Sacred and the Profane, p. 206]. (Wheeler 306)

For Wheeler, Margaret is not only a carrier of sacrilege, of black magic, but she is a harbinger of apostasy, that is her defiance of religion amounts to the beginning of the “process of the desacralization of human existence,” and as Paul makes clear in his Second Epistle to the

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<sup>108</sup> Steible explains that cursing was often associated with witchcraft: “Theologically and morally, cursing of that order was and remains problematic. Between the time *The Mirror* was published and *Richard III* was staged, cursing became secularly controversial with the advent of statutes or acts against witchcraft. Prophesying or looking into the future was considered criminal, as was the use of ‘words, writing, or printing’ that expressed the ‘wish, will, or desire [for] the death [of] or deprivation of . . . the Queen’s Majesty” (3).

Thessalonians, apostasy is the falling away from the faith (i.e., the coming of Antichrist is preceded by the rejection of religion “among them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,” 2 Thess. 2:10, Geneva 97). Margaret’s thirst for revenge is of the same spirit as Richard’s ambition to be king—for he would avenge his father, whose desire was to usurp the throne of Margaret’s husband, slain by Richard. Kristin M. Smith explores the development of Margaret as the witch who conjures Richard the tyrant in the earlier three plays *Henry VI, Part I, II, and III*, and in the later *Richard III*. In Smith’s view, Margaret is a development of the type of female witch explored in the character of Joan La Pucelle, the French saint, Joan of Arc, who appears in *Henry VI, Part I* under the guise of ambiguous sexuality, employing deceptive and diabolical language: “If Joan is Margaret’s precursor who conjures ineffective demonic children, then Margaret in *Richard Duke of York* prefigures her own later ‘Foul wrinkled witch’ in *Richard III* (1.3.164), conjuring Richard with blood before she can curse him” (150). Smith’s analysis of Margaret’s transformation into a witch in the three *Henry VI* plays adds credence to the argument proposed in this thesis that the presence of witchcraft in Shakespeare’s dramatic portrayal of the tyrant-king supports the reading of Antichrist because it has been interpreted, particularly in the medieval tradition as discussed on pages eighteen to twenty of the introduction, as a sign preceding the final world tyrant’s advent. Smith doesn’t specifically describe Richard as an Antichrist type, although she does go as far as to call Richard a devil:

In the casting aside of her maternal garments, Margaret enters fully into the position of the conjuring witch, her attire and language drawn directly from Joan. But while Joan conjures fiends, Margaret uses her murders of York and Rutland to (inadvertently) conjure a much worse devil: Richard, Duke of Gloucester. In the act of curse-driven conjuration, Margaret “births” Richard in the same way Joan “birthed” her fiends: fed by blood and summoned by feminine language. (152)

It is true that there is a distinction between the witch conjuring a fiend and the apostasy ushering in Antichrist, but the difference is one of scope and not necessarily a difference of kind. Because witchcraft was associated with apostasy in the Middle Ages, as discussed in the introduction from pages eighteen to twenty, a substantial growth in the aggregate practice of the “craft” would, logically, portend the much-feared global apostasy alluded to by Paul in his Second

Epistle to the Thessalonians. The argument essentially consists in this line of reasoning: if the majority of people practise Christianity in, say, Europe, then Europe is called Christian. Conversely, if the majority of people practise witchcraft in formerly Christian Europe, then Europe has experienced an apostasy.

## 2.11 Richard as the “Scourge of God”

Although the evil in Richard’s character ultimately remains a mystery, it is a mystery in the same sense as Paul’s “mystery of iniquity,”<sup>109</sup> that is, its origin and activity is covert, and it is only by analogy that it can be understood; that is, Richard is evil in the same sense as is Antichrist. Richard’s revenge, as a “scourge of God,”<sup>110</sup> may be partly attributed to his desire to seek the crown denied to his father. Richard emulates, then, the ambition of his dead father, the Duke of York who was killed by Queen Margaret and Lord Clifford in *Henry VI, Part III*,<sup>111</sup> and in doing so the son comes to reflect the father; but it is a paternal image transmogrified by idolatry, in that the ambition to be king supersedes all other considerations, even obedience to God’s laws as evinced in Richard’s violation of his own conscience. Through this self-imposed process of moral and spiritual spoliation, Richard moves beyond the natural imitation of his father, he violates the boundaries of licit mimesis, resembling instead an alien and infernal father, Satan. It is not uncommon to imitate one’s father; but to consciously adopt one’s father’s prideful ambition to the exclusion of all moral and spiritual considerations is to willingly embrace idolatry, the primary love of something other than, or in place of, God. It is in this sense that Richard’s mimesis comes to resemble Satan, the first idolater, father of all subsequent idolaters. Richard’s inordinate love of the apparent good of the kingship that his father previously coveted constitutes the transformative agency by which lawful love of his father becomes idolatry, by

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<sup>109</sup> The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians: “For the mysterie of iniquitie doeth already worke” (Geneva 96). See also annotation g: “to wit, prively, and is therefore called a mystery because it is secret” (Geneva 96).

<sup>110</sup> Smith describes Richard as a “scourge of God” in the sense that he purges the kingdom of corruption so as to facilitate the rise of the Tudors: “The degeneration of the English monarchy manifests first in Joan’s witchcraft, then in Margaret’s martial motherhood; the resulting corruption may only be eliminated by the creation and destruction of the demonic Scourge of God—Richard III—allowing Richmond to defeat Richard and make way for the Tudor kings. . . Monarchical weakness enables the rise of the corrupt and demonic women, who in turn birth the destructive ‘devil’ Richard, scourging the land in preparation for the coming of the English saviour: Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond” (144, 156).

<sup>111</sup> *Henry VI, Part III*, Act 1.4: “York: . . . There, take the crown, and, with the crown, my curse;/And in thy need such comfort come to thee/As now I reap at thy too cruel hand!/Hard-hearted Clifford, take me from the world:/My soul to heaven, my blood upon your heads!” (1.4.164-168)

which the paternal image comes to reflect the Father of lies. In elevating ambition above salvation in the hierarchy of values, Richard ends, in a twisted parodic sense, by successfully imitating Satan, and so becoming thereby a *figura* of Antichrist. Indeed, Richard believes that he has fully achieved his self-transformation into the theatrical role of diabolical biblical analogue—as manifested in his reply to Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York who confront him with accusations of murder: “Let not the heavens hear these tell-tale women/Rail on the Lord’s anointed. Strike, I say!” (4.4.149-151)”; and when, just prior to the Battle at Bosworth Field, he urges his troops, “March on, join bravely, let us to’t pell-mell,/If not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell” (5.3.313-314); and yet again, before the final battle, when he prays, “Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons!” (5.3.351).

## 2.12 Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth (2 Thess. 28)

The Antichrist in Revelation 19:19-20 is defeated rather suddenly by the appearance of the glorified Christ, who having ascended into “heaven after his resurrection is now “King of Kings, and Lord of Lords” (Geneva 121):

And I saw the beast, and the Kings of the earth, and their warriors gathered together to make battel against him, that sate on the horse & and against his souldiers./But the beast was taken. (Geneva 121)

In *Richard III*, Shakespeare parallels Richard’s defeat with the Apocalyptic defeat of Antichrist on the field of battle by the “sworde of him that sitteth upon the horse, which cometh out of his mouth” (Rev. 19:21, Geneva 121). The sword “which cometh out of” Christ’s mouth is his word, and his word is truth. Aquinas, quoting a Father of the Church, Hilary, in the *Catena Aurea*, explains that the Word of God, Christ, is the source of truth: “whoever will admit that truth is one, must needs admit also that the demonstration of truth, that is wisdom, is one. But if truth is one, and wisdom is one, the Word which enunciates truth and develops wisdom in those who are capable of receiving it, must be One also. . . John himself too in the Apocalypse says, *And his Name is called the Word of God*” (11). In the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul tells his readers that the returning Christ will consume the *man of sinne* (in other words, Antichrist) “with the Spirit of his mouth, and shal abolish [him] with the brightness of his comming” (Geneva 97). A gloss in the Geneva Bible interprets “Spirit of his mouth” as “with his worde” (Geneva 97).

Revelation 19:21 informs us that the remnant of Antichrist's followers would be "slayne with the sworde of him that sitteth upon the horse, which cometh out of his mouth" (Geneva 121). The spirit or sword that comes out of the mouth of Christ is identified by the Geneva editors as "his worde," which is significant because in the Gospel of John 1:4-5 the "Worde" is identified as Christ, who is said to contain life itself, a life that is the "light of men" (Geneva 42). And this light of the human race "shineth in the darknes, & the darkenes comprehended it not" (Geneva 42). Later in John's Gospel at 14:6, we are given an expanded definition of the meaning of this light in the words of Jesus: "I am the Way, and the Trueth, & the Life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Geneva 50).

As Vincent P. Micelli says in *The Antichrist*, "it is stated categorically that the Antichrist will be Satan incarnate. This is a metaphysical impossibility, for only God, or one of the divine persons can possess two natures in one person. An incarnation of Satan whereby he would possess two natures—human and angelic—in one angelic person would call for infinite power, something a mere creature cannot have" (16). In the Christian scheme of things, because Antichrist will be human, and therefore made in the image of God, he is restricted to adopting the likeness of Satan by denying Truth (Christ), and instead embracing falsehood (Satan as the Father of Lies). Richard's scorn for morality mimics Antichrist's scorn for Christ. Analogically, the conscious rejection of truth by the human intellect is an imitation of the primordial angelic rejection by Lucifer and his angels of God. Richard, as a *figura* of Antichrist, rejects his own conscience, and the opportunity for salvation in the Christian economy of things. Having denied his conscience, the human reflection of truth, or the image of God, throughout the play, Richard is now, by way of supernatural intervention, granted a final opportunity for grace, an opportunity which is nothing less than the manifestation of God's providence. But, tragically, in an act of final impenitence, Richard once again scorns grace:

Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls;  
 Conscience is but a word that cowards use,  
 Devised at first to keep the strong in awe,  
 Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law!  
 (To them) March on, join bravely, let us to't pell-mell,  
 if not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell. (5.3. 309-314)

In despising the very nature of conscience, Richard mocks God's grace itself, and he rejects the best chance to escape destruction. Following the biblical pattern, then, once again the scripturally literate will recognize that Richard's chastisement at the hands of God's minister will be the same as Antichrist's: sudden destruction. Richmond is the instrument of that truth in the sense that he assumes the guise of righteousness, and in as much as his opposition to Richard provides the opportunity for the ghostly visitations at Bosworth Field that awaken conscience.

Throughout the play Shakespeare has woven a skein of biblical allusion foreshadowing the final state of Richard, impenitent, utterly opposed to truth and goodness, a destiny that is evident from the beginning. And here, we are adverting not so much as to the fact of Richard's death, known, as previously mentioned, to audiences through the historical record, but rather to the qualitative nature of his demise, what might be called the poetic truth of Richard's end. The biblical lineaments of the figure of Satan and his Antichrist are insinuated throughout the play by way of various allusions that serve to heighten Shakespeare's dramatic rendition of the rise and fall of Richard III. Richard, at the apotheosis of his quest for the crown, suffers catastrophic defeat. Richard's career can be summed up thus: possessed by an inordinate desire to be king, Richard aspires to usurp the throne by imitating the cunning and guile of the devil, by deceiving others as to his moral nature, and by arrogating the power of God to himself, the power over life and death, the right of judgement. He rises swiftly to the high summit of kingship, only to fall just as suddenly. Disdaining his last opportunity for grace and mercy, Richard instead chooses to remain Richard, the proud individual, and in the end, just one of the many *figuras* of the final consummation of evil.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Macbeth as *Figura* of Evil

There is a congruity of form between *Richard III* and *Macbeth* acknowledged by scholars,<sup>112</sup> and mostly attributed to a similarity in structure,<sup>113</sup> theme,<sup>114</sup> and imagery;<sup>115</sup> but Shakespeare's use of biblical allusion to suggest the Christian concept of ultimate human evil has been somewhat overlooked, especially as it relates to the tragic nature of the tyrant king. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare continues his exploration of the Antichrist *figura* begun in *Richard III*, but the biblical allusions penetrate deeper focussing on the internal, desolate soul of the man who dares to usurp the throne of God's anointed king. It is through biblical allusion to the figure of Antichrist that Shakespeare unites both the earlier play and the more mature *Macbeth* with the fundamentally orthodox, medieval portrayal of ultimate human evil. What distinguishes the later play from the earlier, is the depth of understanding that Shakespeare brings to the nature of evil. Both the identification of Macbeth with the figure of Antichrist, and the reason for his conformity to the particularly Christian image of evil, are revealed by Shakespeare in the first act of the play in a scene that is redolent of the primordial temptation scene in Genesis. In Macbeth's first encounter with the witches, we witness the reason for his transformation into a figure of Antichrist: that is, he is conjured, like Richard in the earlier play, by the apostatic spirit of witchcraft. However, unlike *Richard III*, where Shakespeare's focus is directed toward the

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<sup>112</sup> Fred Manning Smith enumerates some of the character similarities between Richard and Macbeth: "Here then are two 'tyrants, usurpers, murderers, both aspiring and ambitious, both courageous, cruel, treacherous.' Both are called 'hellhounds'; Richard is so called by Margaret (iv. iv. 48) and Macbeth by Macduff (v. viii.3)" (1003). And, Smith again: "But so many of the situations are the same, in so similar a sequence, in *Macbeth* and *Richard III*, that to say we find here the usual repetition is not enough. . . Should we not say that the numerous parallels we have noticed make it much more probable that Shakespeare had *Richard III* in his thoughts when he wrote *Macbeth*?" (1015).

<sup>113</sup> Daniel E. Hughes gives a good summation of the parallels in structure between the two plays: "But even apart from this rather narrow view, the Elizabethans would see in both *Richard III* and *Macbeth* the same basic principle: (1) a break in the order of things; (2) violent upheaval in the moral sphere paralleled by disorder in the physical world; (3) order re-established violently" (846). Aerol Arnold agrees that there are structural similarities in both plays: "Despite differences in the quality and the complexity of the two plays [*Richard III* and *Macbeth*], they share certain structural traits" (57).

<sup>114</sup> Aerol Arnold sees thematic similarities in the two plays: "Both [*Richard III* and *Macbeth*] are plays of prophesy, fulfillment, and recapitulation . . . Both are plays of usurpation and murder and of troubled sleep" (57).

<sup>115</sup> Smith also spots a correlation of imagery in the two plays, particularly with the image of blood: "Returning to a comparison of *Macbeth* and *Richard III* note that the word 'blood' occurs throughout the two plays, and the washing of blood from the hands is alluded to in *Richard III* (iv. i. 68) and in *Macbeth* (II. ii. 46-47, 60-61, 67, and v.i). Writing of *Richard III* Chambers says, 'The word 'blood' runs like a *leit-motif* through the play'; and Bradley says of *Macbeth*, 'It cannot be an accident that the image of blood is forced upon us continually'" (1014).



protagonist's malevolent will-to-evil, and the external actions he takes to accomplish his professed goals, in *Macbeth* the point of view is internally oriented through the villain's imagination so that the external world becomes a reflection of the inner state of the man, and through this dramatic vehicle Shakespeare manifests the psychological meaning of sacrilege in the human soul. This sacrilege constitutes, as it did too, but perhaps in a more perfunctory manner, in *Richard III*, Macbeth's identification with the Abomination of Desolation. Such an observation is borne out by a consideration of some of the play's central allusions identified by Naseeb Shaheen in his *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays*. Because there is a continuity between *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, at least such a continuity is here being posited, there should be some repetition of the biblical references that are peculiar to Antichrist; and indeed, that is precisely what is found.

Shakespeare's drama is not, as it was in *Richard III*, primarily a narrative about the murderous deceptions and manipulations of the quest for worldly power, but rather it is a chronicle of the desecration of the divine image in a man's soul. In other words, *Macbeth* delves into the internal consequences of the violation of conscience, of the will deliberately turned to evil, in a man who usurps the throne of a legitimate king. As a dramatic study of the psychology of evil, it begins where *Richard III* ends.<sup>116</sup> After all, Richard does not examine his conscience until after he has been visited by the ghosts of his victims during a nightmarish dream while asleep in his tent on Bosworth field in the third scene of the final act of the play. Macbeth, by contrast, immediately reveals moral anguish in scene three of the first act after encountering the witches on the heath, hearing their prophecies, and discovering through the report of Ross and Angus that one of the predictions (i.e., Macbeth's promotion to Thane of Cawdor) has been confirmed by fact. In the earlier *Richard III*, Shakespeare does not fully explore the origin of Richard's taste for evil,<sup>117</sup> instead he simply reveals the protagonist's determination to "prove a villain" (1.130), and his

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<sup>116</sup> Hughes recognizes the difference between Macbeth's inner life and Richard's, but perhaps mistakes Richard's brief dalliance with conscience at the end of the play as a positive development when in reality it is a last chance at remorse perfunctorily dismissed: "Although Richard denies the validity of conscience, he dies somewhat more aware of his own troubled conscience than he was when he set out upon his treacherous course. Macbeth, on the other hand, is more aware of the promptings of conscience at the beginning of his evil career than he is at the end of it" (851). Hughes is correct in his assessment of the development of conscience (an inner recognition of one's obligation to the good), but it should be noted that both villains utterly repudiate the claims of conscience by the end of their "evil careers."

<sup>117</sup> Hughes comes to very much the same conclusion about Shakespeare's exposure of Richard's motivation: "Not very much of Richard's own inner states is revealed as he proceeds to lay his plots" (850).

ambition to “play the devil” (1.3.337), suggesting through biblical allusion his association with Antichrist; in the more mature treatment of the same theme in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare establishes at the very beginning of the play the reason for his protagonist’s descent into evil, the willful embrace of occultic knowledge in Macbeth’s encounter with the witches. It is true that Richard is “determined to prove a villain” because, as he himself explains, he is an outcast from the “fair well-spoken days” (1.1.29) of peaceful courtly life, due to his disfigurement, and “cannot prove a lover” (1.1.28). He therefore hates “the idle pleasures” (1.1.31) of his own time. Richard’s explanation of his villainy sounds something like envy, and is at best a perfunctory justification. The real root of Richard’s evil is revealed later in his encounter with Margaret, amidst accusations of witchcraft, as discussed in the previous chapter on pages forty-three to forty-eight. Black magic lurks beneath the surface of *Richard III* implying a relationship to Antichrist that is confirmed by biblical allusion; but in *Macbeth* the occult depths are revealed immediately. Continuing the theme of *Richard III*, but magnifying it considerably, *Macbeth* traces the nature of the Abomination of Desolation in the temple of God, what in the earlier play is concisely called the “handi-work” of God; that is, the human person.

As discussed in the introduction, Shakespeare’s use of biblical allusion in both plays serves to adumbrate the chief characteristics of Antichrist, characteristics which originate in pride and swell to self-exaltation at the expense of one’s fellow creatures. What is striking about Richard and Macbeth is that both characters are possessed by a single-minded desire to be king, an ambition that in both cases is intemperate. Irenaeus identified a similar inordinate ambition as one of the primary characteristics of Antichrist: “although a mere slave, he wishes himself to be proclaimed as a king. For he (Antichrist) being endued with all power of the devil, shall come, not as a righteous king, nor as a legitimate king [i.e., one] in subjection to God” (553). From an Aristotelian-Thomistic perspective, the apparent good of occupying the monarchial throne has replaced the real good of submitting oneself to God’s will; and, like Adam and Eve who would taste the forbidden fruit, no matter the cost, to be as gods, both tyrant-kings are willing to forgo the approval of God, the creator and preserver of life in the orthodox conception, so as to win the temporal crown. It is a pyrrhic victory because it results in the desolate soul, which is an abomination, biblically speaking, in the eyes of God who is, again in the orthodox view, ultimate truth. In *Richard III*, Shakespeare shows a man pursuing the mere bauble of an apparent good, the earthly crown, a quarry that will cost him his life, and perhaps, as implied by Margaret’s

curses, much more. Conversely, in *Macbeth*, the protagonist is not long-delayed in the pursuit of the crown,<sup>118</sup> but rather suddenly attains the apparent good of an earthly throne at the cost of his “eternal jewel given to the common enemy of man” (3.1.68-69). Shakespeare shows us his subsequent despair.

The focus of this chapter will be to analyse the biblical allusions identified by Shaheen that speak to the apocalyptic theme of Antichrist, especially as it relates to the Abomination of Desolation, and how Macbeth becomes a figure of the end-time tyrant.

### 3.1 The Antetypes of Macbeth

The analysis of the biblical allusions as presented in this chapter may be seen to contribute to the study of the play’s moralistic purpose. To adequately situate the Antichrist premise in the scholarly discussion surrounding the question of possible literary prototypes for Macbeth, it is necessary to indulge in a brief digression summing up a list of plausible influences. As with the character of Richard, Shakespearean scholars have detected various influences in Shakespeare’s portrayal of Macbeth. He has been described as a type of the Old Testament Saul,<sup>119</sup> as bearing a strong resemblance to the Herod of the mystery cycles,<sup>120</sup> similar to Orestes,<sup>121</sup> a Faustian parallel,<sup>122</sup> resembling the Satanic serpent of Genesis,<sup>123</sup> a poet/magician,<sup>124</sup> an amalgam of King

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<sup>118</sup> Smith thinks the reason for Richard’s slower acquisition of the throne has to do with Shakespeare’s earlier unrefined use of Chronicle history: “Because more men have to be killed and more scheming has to be done (the diffuseness of chronicle history is still apparent in *Richard III*) Richard does not become king until at the end of Act III” (1005).

<sup>119</sup> H.W.B. argues that the similarity between the biblical Saul and Shakespeare’s Macbeth results in a “narrative closely resembling that contained in the biography recorded in the first book of Samuel” (273).

<sup>120</sup> Hassel contends that “we have still not done justice to Macbeth’s dynamic legacy from the Herod plays” (205).

<sup>121</sup> Susanne L. Wofford points to a correlation *Macbeth* and Greek tragedy: The *Oresteia* then, like *Macbeth*, tells the story of the origin of an institution but reminds us constantly of the darker underside of that story (513).

<sup>122</sup> Henry I. Christ argues for an affinity between *Macbeth* and the Faust legend: “In many ways *Macbeth* parallels the legend. Like Faust, who yielded everything for a trivial gain, Macbeth gives his ‘eternal jewel . . . to the common enemy of man’ for ultimately worthless gains. Shakespeare could easily have been familiar with Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*” (212).

<sup>123</sup> Philip C. Kolin notes biblical echoes to the fall of Satan in *Macbeth*: “Shakespeare hints at Biblical crimes and punishment serving as models for his Scottish tragedy. Macbeth’s downfall is thus played against the cosmic backdrop of Satan’s defeat” (159-160).

<sup>124</sup> Arnold Stein affirms the power of the word wielded by Macbeth like a weapon of doom: “In creating, by words and rhythms and images, this world of witchcraft and murder, he [Macbeth] transforms himself into a murdering creature” (275).

James' ideas on kingship and evil,<sup>125</sup> as a kind of tragic hero self-doomed by illusion,<sup>126</sup> and even as an uxorious husband.<sup>127</sup> The catalogue of various interpretations cited above is an acknowledgement of the basic premise that Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is deeply rooted in the Western concept of evil, in the types that have come to represent evil in the Western canon; but, such a list is incomplete if it does not include the figure of Antichrist, the most frightening character in all of Western literature because he is prophesied to come, cannot be fully comprehended yet, and therefore he is one of the most provocative figures to confront the literary imagination.

### 3.2 The Moral Cosmos of *Macbeth*

In *Our Naked Frailties*, Paul A. Jorgensen confirms the existence of the didactic element in *Macbeth* in his argument that the protagonist's failure is due to the inordinate power of his imagination in preference to reason and conscience (17). As to why Shakespeare would rely almost exclusively on the faculty of imagination to achieve the effects so central to *Macbeth*, if that power of the mind was held in suspicion by Renaissance moral teaching, Jorgensen resorts to the scholarship of modern psychology:

I am obviously pointing toward *Macbeth*, and I recognize not only that there is much sensation in the play which is, at best, amoral . . . but that moral purpose in a tragic drama can be an enlargement of the sensibilities so as to make us more humanly and universally aware of man's plight. (18)

The moral purpose that Jorgensen discerns in *Macbeth* can be ascertained not just in Shakespeare's employment of the powerful faculty of imagination, not just in Lily B. Campbell's attribution of Shakespeare's use of the passions for didactic purposes, nor even primarily in David N. Beauregard's incisive anatomy of Aristotelian-Thomistic virtue ethics in Shakespeare's

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<sup>125</sup> Jane H. Jack perceives the influence of King James, particularly his theology, on *Macbeth*: "my main purpose is to draw attention to the influence exerted on *Macbeth* by the strong theological bias of James' mind and by his constant references to particular places in the Old and New Testaments" (175).

<sup>126</sup> Barbara L. Parker thinks *Macbeth*'s tragic flaw lies in his hubris: "Macbeth's illusion lies in his belief that he can transcend destiny. Symbolically, therefore, he arrogates to himself the properties of a god . . . That *Macbeth* has doomed himself is further signified by the Biblical allusions pervading the play (476-487).

<sup>127</sup> Hyman L. Muslin psychologizes *Macbeth* into a dramatic rendition of the Freudian Oedipal complex: "Lady *Macbeth* is not just *Macbeth*'s hardhearted ambitious wife, but rather his idealized parent. He is incapable of disobeying her, because she is revealed as the source of his strength" (362).

plays, as briefly signified in the section on moral evil on page twenty-two of the introduction, but it can also be seen in Shakespeare's deliberate insertion of biblical allusions throughout the text that speak to the Christian concern with moral evil in its most concentrated human form. The biblical allusions in *Macbeth* not only point to Macbeth's association with the figure of Antichrist, but they assist in building an apocalyptic context for the play. Peter Milward has elaborated on this in his book *Shakespeare's Apocalypse*. Milward contends that *Macbeth* is "exceptionally fraught" with the "apocalyptic imagery of the Bible" (55). But he also argues that, in addition to the "biblical and particularly apocalyptic imagery used to heighten the dramatic effect of the story," *Macbeth* reflects the "political and religious situation of Shakespeare's time" (55). Jorgensen argues that the evil at the heart of *Macbeth* is of central importance, but he thinks that Shakespeare deliberately obscured its identity so as to increase the element of mystery in the play: "For in no other work does Shakespeare succeed in creating--nor does he try to create--a more disturbing, more pervasive, or, I think, more darkly fundamental kind of evil" (41). What may seem contradictory in the two different approaches of Jorgensen and Milward is resolved in an appeal to the biblical perspective on moral evil: it is called by Paul in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians 2:7, the "mystery of iniquity." Although moral evil, both on the microcosmic level of the human soul, and on the vast, macrocosmic scale of what Paul calls the apostasy, is a mystery, and it is appropriately treated so by Shakespeare according to Jorgensen, there are certain signs by which we can identify its advent, at least as it is predicted by Scripture to manifest itself in historical time as an aggregate of humanity's moral mode. In Scripture, Antichrist's identity is hidden, it is hinted at, but not disclosed, perhaps in conformity with the whole idea of the "mystery of iniquity." Since Shakespeare is indeed dealing with the "most darkly fundamental kind of evil" in *Macbeth*, it is appropriate that the play adverts to the most fundamental source of evil in Scripture, and at the same time draws a veil over its identity, as Jorgensen observes, in much the same way. Milward and Jorgensen are both correct, from different sides of the spectrum; and this chapter attempts to span the distance between the two perspectives by asserting a *via media* that reconciles Jorgensen's mysterious evil with Milward's apocalyptic context in the analogical model of Macbeth as *figura* of Antichrist.<sup>128</sup> Of course, it is

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<sup>128</sup> Emerson gives a thorough elucidation of how the notion of *figura* developed out of biblical typology, which is perhaps the primary way that Christians interpreted Scripture: "In addition to identifying these scriptural symbols as representing Antichrist, medieval commentators also developed a typology of Antichrist. The typological reading of the Bible is evident in Paul's approach to the Old Testament (1 Cor. 10:11) and in the interpretations of early

understood that Macbeth is a literary *figura* by virtue of his fictive nature as a creature of Shakespeare's imagination.

In *Shakespeare's Apocalypse*, Milward views *Macbeth* as deeply apocalyptic: "Finally, with regard to the theme of apocalypse, the word 'doomsday' may recur three times in *Hamlet* but it has little meaning in each of the cases where it occurs; whereas while it never once occurs in *Macbeth*, the reality is deeply present" (46). In *Biblical Influences in Shakespeare's Great Tragedies*, Milward thinks Shakespeare was drawing a parallel between Macbeth, the murderer of Duncan, whom he views as a Christ figure, and Judas. Significantly, Judas is held by Emerson to prefigure the final villain of the final book of the Bible, Antichrist.<sup>129</sup> Discussing the strong overtones of apocalyptic imagery that accompany Macduff's discovery of Duncan's bloody corpse, Milward compares Macduff's cry of "horror" to a sermon by a contemporary theologian, Henry Smith, on "The Betraying of Christ" wherein the word "horror" is rhetorically repeated to emphasize the gravity of Judas' betrayal (50). Milward identifies the "horror" with Shakespeare's use of the phrase "The Lord's anointed temple" when Macduff cries out, after witnessing the slaughtered corpse of King Duncan, a guest at Macbeth's castle, at 2.3.68-70: "Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope/The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence/The life o'th' building." What is especially relevant for the present chapter is Milward's interpretation of the temple, bearing in mind the discussion in the previous chapter on *Richard III* about the

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Christian commentators, such as Tertullian. Typology, unlike some allegory, does not deny the historical validity of the original text. The character or event of the Old Testament is more than an *integumentum* of the true referent of the New Testament. As Erich Auerbach points out, the '*figura* is something real and historical which announces something else that is real and historical.' Although the beast as *symbol* of Antichrist is neither physically real nor historical, Antiochus Epiphanes is both a physically real and historical type of the awaited physically real and historical Antichrist. . . As sacred history contains numerous types of Christ—Adam, Abel, Melchizedek, Isaac, David, Solomon—so it also contains numerous types of Antichrist. For example, Jerome (ca. 345-419) clearly refers to the typological reading in his commentary on Daniel: 'Therefore, as the Savior has both Solomon and other saints as types of his coming, so Antichrist is to be understood to have as a type of himself the most wicked king Antiochus, who persecuted the saints and violated the temple.' The comparisons continue in the later Middle Ages. Applying the typology broadly in his brief discussion of Antichrist, Thomas Aquinas states that all evil characters who precede Antichrist are figures of Antichrist" (24-25).

<sup>129</sup> Emerson explains how the *figuras* of Antichrist have burst the boundaries of Scripture taking in historical characters who appear outside the pages of the Bible: "Although the types of Christ are restricted to Old Testament characters, commentators identify types of Antichrist in both the Old and the New Testaments and even in later church history, since the full revelation of Antichrist is not to take place until the end of the world. Thus Assyria, Assur, Holofernes, Abimelech, Doeg Idumaeus, Amalech, Nebuchadnezzar, and Antiochus Epiphanes of the Old Testament, Herod, Barabbas, and Simon Magus of the New Testament, and Nero, Diocletian, Domitian, and Julian of early church history are considered types of Antichrist" (26).

Abomination of Desolation, its relationship to the temple of God, and the meaning of the temple in the New Testament:

As for the mention of ‘The Lord’s anointed temple’, it may well echo the words of Jesus in John ii:19: ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up’, with the explanation in John ii:21: ‘He spoke of the temple of his body’ (51).

In *Richard III*, Shakespeare’s allusion to the Abomination of Desolation, and its association with Antichrist, was secreted in the cryptic epithet uttered by Queen Margaret in recrimination of Richard, “that foul defacer of God’s handiwork” (4.4.51). In *Macbeth*, however, the association is made much more explicit because of Macduff’s language upon discovering the murdered corpse of King Duncan. Words such as “sacrilege,” “anointed temple,” “broke,” “stole,” “the life,” “the building,” reverberate with Scriptural significance pointing directly to the Abomination of Desolation.

### 3.3 The Defilement of God’s Temple

With Macbeth’s bloody slaughter of King Duncan, we enter into the realm of apocalyptic nightmare as asserted by Milward. The Abomination of Desolation in *Macbeth*, if one extrapolates on Milward’s gnomic interpretation of Macduff’s vociferation, refers not just to the desecration of “The Lord’s anointed temple,” but it refers also to Macbeth’s arrogation of the office of anointed king, in other words, the murderous usurper analogously sits “as God, in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (Geneva 96), or, for those who prefer simile to metaphor, Macbeth sits as God’s representative, proclaiming himself as such. Barbara L. Parker in “‘Macbeth’: The Great Illusion” suggests something very close to the interpretation given here of Macbeth’s usurpation of the throne and its figurative meaning: “Symbolically, therefore, he arrogates to himself the properties of a god . . . That Macbeth has doomed himself is further signified by the Biblical allusions pervading the play” (476-487).

Through the act of regicide, specifically the murder of God’s anointed king, Macbeth becomes the embodiment of the definition of sacrilege.<sup>130</sup> Shakespeare shows us the psychological

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<sup>130</sup>sacrilege, n. The crime or sin of stealing or misappropriating what is consecrated to God's service. In ecclesiastical use, extended to include any kind of outrage on consecrated persons or things, and the violation.

meaning of sacrilege in the human soul by revealing Macbeth's inmost thoughts. Milward does not draw out this conclusion, but he does a good job of setting the context for it by pointing out the unique atmosphere of *Macbeth*: "Nowhere, it may confidently be said, in all of Shakespeare's plays is there anything in apocalyptic imagery to compare with this remarkable outburst whose feeling far exceeds the objective correlative of this particular crime" (51). In speaking thus of Macduff's dramatic exclamation at 2.3.79-82, "Up, up and see/The great doom's image! Malcolm! Banquo!/As from your graves rise up and walk like sprites/To countenance this horror! Ring the bell!", Milward affirms the role of Macbeth as a *figura* of Antichrist. For if we are in the realm of apocalyptic nightmare, and that is what Milward is suggesting, then we require a villain to mirror the great villain of Revelation. Without the sinister forces of evil threatening the good there can be no apocalyptic genre.

The horror that Macduff gives expression to in the quote above can be explained by way of medieval scholastic psychology if one recognizes it as the result of passion, in particular of fear, as articulated by Aquinas: "Among the other passions of the soul, after sorrow, fear chiefly has the character of passion" (ST, Pt. I-II Q. 41 Art. 1, p. 764). Furthermore, Aquinas asserts that "fear is caused by the imagination of a future evil which is either corruptive or painful" (ST, Pt. I-II Q. 41 Art. 1, p. 764). In Campbell's conception of Shakespeare's plays as anatomically constructed on the passions so as to both teach and entertain, an idea discussed in her book *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes*, *Macbeth* is presented not primarily as a "tragedy of ambition" but rather as a "study in fear" (208). Campbell's insight bears weight for the argument that Macduff's horror is rooted in a fear of future evil, discussed above, because in the order of things fear is the basis of horror,<sup>131</sup> especially when it is a fear activated by the apprehension of a supernatural event or being. Rudolf Otto refers to this category of fear in his book *The Idea of the Holy* as the "*mysterium tremendum*," a kind of religious dread distinct from natural fear:

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"sacrilege, n.1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2018, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/169585](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/169585). Accessed 29 December 2018.

<sup>131</sup> A painful emotion compounded of loathing and fear; a shuddering with terror and repugnance; strong aversion mingled with dread; the feeling excited by something shocking or frightful. Also, in weaker sense, intense dislike or repugnance. (The prevalent use at all times). "horror, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2018, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/88577](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/88577). Accessed 29 December 2018.



The natural man is quite unable even to ‘shudder’ (grauen) or feel horror in the real sense of the word. For ‘shuddering’ is something more than ‘natural,’ ordinary fear. It implies that the mysterious is already beginning to loom before the mind, to touch the feelings.  
(15)

The biblical passage that best exemplifies Otto’s definition of horror is found in Genesis 15:12, specifically in the *Bishops’ Bible* (c. 1568), a translation that would have been available to Shakespeare. In this passage, Abram (not having yet received his full name, “Abraham”) asks for a sign from God to affirm God’s promise that he shall inherit the promised land; and this promise, affirmed by a mysterious sacrifice, becomes the basis of the Old Covenant: “And when the sunne was downe, there fell a deepe sleepe upon Abram: and lo, an horroure of great darknesse fell upon hym” (Bishops’ 13). Abram’s horror is rooted in what Otto calls “religious dread,” and it is the same type of horror that Macduff gives articulation to upon witnessing the ruined corpse of King Duncan, God’s representative on earth.

The ruined appearance of a cruelly butchered king, who, because he is anointed, represents in a special sense the majesty of God, is most certainly an object of horror for his subjects who believe in the sacrality of kingship. Marc Bloch in *The Royal Touch* writes about how kingship was viewed in the Middle Ages, the historical Macbeth’s era:

Sacred actions, objects or individuals were thus thought of not only as reservoirs of powers available beyond this present life, but also as sources of energy capable of exerting an immediate influence on this earth too. . . . Let us remember, then, what kings were at this period. Almost everyone believed, in the words of Peter of Blois, in their ‘holiness.’ But this notion went even further. Whence came this holiness? . . . more specifically and from a more Christian sentiment, from the religious rite of unction—in other words, from the consecrated oil which likewise seemed the most effective remedy for so many illnesses (42-43).

King Duncan, as the “Lord’s anointed,” is a special instance of the metaphorical “temple of God.” The idea of the “Lord’s anointed” derives from the notion that the person of the king is sacred, as previously explained by Milward. And so, when Duncan is ruthlessly murdered, it is as if the temple of God has been desecrated. Such a sacrilege provokes fear on the level of the

supernatural order, horror in the presence of something otherworldly, either demonic or holy, at least this is so in Macduff's case, and in Macbeth's as well. Macduff's response is horror at "the great doom's image," an image which in the Scriptural sense can be interpreted as the image of the beast spoken of in Revelation 13:14-15. The "doom" that Shakespeare's Macduff refers to is a combination of the two meanings of the word as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "A statute, law, enactment; *gen.* an ordinance, decree," and, "A judgement or decision, esp. one formally pronounced; a sentence; mostly in adverse sense, condemnation, sentence of punishment."<sup>132</sup> Macduff's utterance of the word "doom" reverberates like a great ripple in time, it is the Abomination of Desolation in embryonic form, expanding outward, growing in maturity, until it touches the apocalyptic doom brought on by Antichrist at the end of the world when all will be forced by the False prophet to worship the image of the beast at the terrible cost of damning their souls, or, by refusing such a demand, to be killed (Revelation 13:15-16). Macbeth's horror at the image in his mind, that is, Duncan's murder, issues from his fear of divine retribution, the same horror alluded to in Revelation, that is, the horror of damnation:

This supernatural soliciting  
 Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,  
 Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
 Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor;  
 If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
 Against the use of nature? Present fears  
 Are less than horrible imaginings.  
 My thought, whose murder is yet but fantastical,  
 Shakes so my single state of man that function  
 Is smothered in surmise, and nothing is  
 But what is not. (1.3.130-142)

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<sup>132</sup> "doom, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2018, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/56805](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/56805). Accessed: 11 January 2019.

Macbeth's horror<sup>133</sup> at the visionary image, the murder of Duncan, derives from his fear of divine retribution because, as implied, he is contemplating the possibility of being the instrument of Duncan's doom. In the religious sense, then, it is the horror of becoming God's enemy that so unsettles Macbeth. He fears the consequence of damning his own soul as the price for the bauble of a limited temporal power. The image of Duncan's slaughter presents itself to Macbeth's imagination as the Abomination of Desolation, in other words, the "great doom's image."

### 3.4 The "Truth" Versus the "Lie"

The "horrible imaginings" (1.3.148) that Macbeth experiences immediately after his initial encounter with the witches on the heath come as a result of his conscious assent to evil. An immanent relationship between Macbeth and Satan is suggested by Shakespeare in this scene, a scene that is saturated with the presence of the devil. The diabolic effect is accomplished through a laconic line, "What, can the Deuill speake true?" at 1.3.107, delivered by Banquo who, after encountering with Macbeth the preternatural appearance of the witches, responds to the uncanny piece of news from Ross that Macbeth has just been named Thane of Cawdor as the witches had prophesied. The reference, which according to Shaheen (623) is "certain," is to John 8:44: "The Devil. . . there is no trueth in him. When he speaketh a lie, then speaketh he of his owne: for he is a liar, and the father thereof" (Geneva 47)<sup>134</sup>. The context of the allusion relates to Jesus' defence of the woman taken in adultery and his rebuke of the Scribes and Pharisees, her accusers. By questioning the identity of the woman's accusers, Christ overturns their self-righteousness, and deflects their accusations back upon their own heads.

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<sup>133</sup> See *Oxford English Dictionary* for the relationship of the word "horrid" to "horror": Etymology: < Latin *horridus* bristling, rough, shaggy; rude, savage, unpolished; terrible, frightful, < *horrēre* : see [HORRE v.](#) Compare Italian *orrido*. . . Causing horror or aversion; revolting to sight, hearing, or contemplation; terrible, dreadful, frightful; abominable, detestable. In earlier use nearly synonymous with *horrible*; in modern use somewhat less strong, and tending to pass into the weakened colloquial sense (3). . . B. *adv.* 'Horridly', 'abominably', very objectionably. *colloq. or vulgar.* horrid, adj. and adv." (*OED Online*, Oxford University Press, July 2018, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/88563](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/88563). Accessed 5 November 2018.)

<sup>134</sup> The Bishops' Bible reads substantially the same as the Geneva Bible, while the Rheims substitutes the word "verity" for "truth", and "mankiller" for "murtherer"; but overall, it is also substantially the same. It can be deduced from Shakespeare's use of the word "true" that he may have had in mind either the Geneva or the Bishops' version.

Banquo's allusion to the devil focusses the audience's attention on the possible source of the witches' prophecy. As Aquinas states in the *Summa Theologica*, prophecy is normally given by way of divine revelation, but may also, in a limited manner, be given by demonic agency:

Wherefore those men to whom something is revealed by the demons are styled in the Scriptures as prophets, not simply, but with an addition, for instance as *false prophets*, or *prophets of idols*. (ST Pt. II-II Q. 172 Art. 6, p. 1894)

But, more subtly, because Macbeth receives the witches' prediction as true prophecy after Ross's startling news, in a figurative sense he enters the father/child relationship spoken of by Christ: "When he speaketh a lie, then speaketh he of his own" (John 8:44, Geneva 47). In this passage from John's Gospel, Jesus is repudiating the Pharisees who he knows are secretly plotting to kill him because they feel threatened by his teaching authority. He contrasts his relationship to God the Father with their relationship to the devil, the Father of lies, a murderer from the beginning. Just as the Pharisees in John's Gospel enter into a spiritual relationship with Satan in their rejection and hatred of Christ, a relationship that Jesus compares to that between father and son, in the sense that the father is the cause of the son, so Shakespeare's Macbeth is spiritually adopted by the source of all falsehood, Satan, when he places his confidence in the false prophecy of the devil's agents. The "lie," which originates with Satan, and is associated with his identity as Father of lies,<sup>135</sup> is also closely associated with Antichrist who is chiefly characterised as a deceiver. As well, Antichrist is the contrary of Christ who, in John 14:6, says, "I am the Way, and the Truth, & the Life" (Geneva 50). As Christ is the "Truth," Antichrist is the "Lie." What that means, is that Macbeth, by believing the witches, who are emissaries of the devil, believes the "lie,"<sup>136</sup> and by believing the "lie" becomes, in Christ's sense, a son of the devil,<sup>137</sup> and so a *figura* of Antichrist. The entire play unfolds from this pivotal moment, a decisive turn

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<sup>135</sup> John 8:44: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lustes of your father ye wil do: he hathe bene a murtherer from the beginning, & abode not in the trueth, because there is no trueth in him. When he speaketh a lie, then speaketh he of his owne for he is a liar, and the father thereof" (Geneva 47).

<sup>136</sup> As previously discussed in the introduction, falsehood is associated with evil, as truth is associated with good, so Christ and his followers stand for truth, while Antichrist and his followers hold to the lie, or falsehood, as Paul adverts to in 2 Thess. 2:10-11: "And in all deceivableness of unrighteousnes, among them that perish, because thei received not the love of the trueth, that they might be saved./And therefore God shal send them strong delusion, that they shulde beleve lyes" (Geneva 97).

<sup>137</sup> Hippolytus in his *Treatise on Antichrist* denominates the end-time tyrant as belonging to a filial relationship with the Father of lies: "By the unrighteous judge, who fears not God, neither regards man, he means without doubt Antichrist, as he is a son of the devil and a vessel of Satan" (216).

contained in the gnomic allusion uttered by Banquo. What truly unseats Macbeth, then, is not necessarily his ambition, as proposed by Campbell, but rather his willingness to believe the witches, representatives of the Father of lies. That is not to say that the passions are not contributory to Macbeth's downfall into evil, they are certainly the pre-conditions necessary for his embrace of falsehood. In the order of precedence, however, it is Macbeth's acceptance of the witches' prophecy that is the cause of his spiral into evil. From a philosophical perspective, Macbeth's error, his belief in the witches' prophecy, is founded on incomplete knowledge. He is promised the throne but Macbeth is not told the full price he will have to pay for it. The apparent good of kingship promised by the prediction of the witches is held by Macbeth's intellect as a truth that will bear the fruit of goodness. The analysis proffered here is not vitiated by Macbeth's doubts after hearing of his promotion from Ross and Angus, indeed the aside in which he expatiates on the "supernatural soliciting" that "cannot be ill, cannot be good" (1.3.130-31), surely serves to manifest Macbeth's conscious decision to believe the witches in the face even of the warnings of his own conscience. Macbeth's fault lies in affirming an incomplete truth that promises a mere apparent good. The evil act of the will has its genesis in the apperception of the intellect that results in falsehood: first the idea, then the act. The source of the ideation must be taken into account before acting on it, something Macbeth fails to do. Macbeth's failure to probe deeper into the source of the witches' prophecy bears a substantial resemblance to the Genesis account of mankind's fall in the Garden of Eden, a fall that was initiated by Eve's naive belief in the serpent's lie. As touched on previously in the introduction on page 24 to 25, once the error is mistaken for truth by the intellect, and passionately embraced as an apparent good by the will, sinfulness becomes the chosen state of that person; and that is why Antichrist is called by Paul in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians *the man of sinne* (2 Thess. 2: 3, Genesis 96): his whole intellect, and his whole will, is endarkened through Satanic error. On a smaller scale, and in a far less radical sense, Macbeth undergoes a transformation in his encounter with the witches on the blasted heath, in an environment that is both "foul and fair" (1.3.39), signifying the mixture of good and evil. It is exactly the mixture of opposites that is at the heart of the witches' prophecy, for it contains both truth and error, a fact that heightens the deadly nature of the "lie," as Aquinas makes clear in a discussion of false prophecy:

As the good is in relation to things, so is the true in relation to knowledge. . . For the intellect is led astray to falsehood by the semblance of truth, even as the will is seduced to

evil by the semblance of goodness. Wherefore Chrysostom says: The devil is allowed sometimes to speak true things, in order that his unwonted truthfulness may gain credit to his lie. (ST, Pt. II-II Q. 172, Art. 6, p. 1894-1895).

The Thomistic definition of false prophecy is the philosophical equivalent of Shakespeare's poetic utterance in the mouth of Banquo, "to win us to our harm,/The instruments of Darkness tell us Truths,/Win us with honest trifles, to betray's/In deepest consequences" (1.3.123-126). In other words, the devil and his minions employ the appearance of truth so as to deceive, and lead into destruction, the unwary, the naïve human creature. In as much as both witches and Antichrist are instruments of the devil, their primary weapon is deception. Macbeth, in as much as he falls prey to deception, comes to embody falsehood itself in the guise of the wicked ruler, and so is transformed into a *figura* of Antichrist.

The witches are associated with Satan, as the text itself reveals, through Banquo's cautionary words to Macbeth about the "instruments of darkness" (1.3.124). They bring about satanic darkness in the human soul, just as apostasy on a larger scale brings about the advent of Antichrist, the apocalyptic reign of the power of Satan unleashed on earth. Macbeth's passions do indeed contribute to his downfall, but they are the mere instruments upon which supernatural evil plays once permission has been implicitly granted through Macbeth's acquiescence to mendacity as manifested in the occultic forecast of the witches. It is through Shaheen's identification of biblical allusions in Shakespeare's play, allusions that sharpen the focus on the concept of Christian moral evil and its apogee in the figure of Antichrist, that we are able to peer deeply into the reasons for Macbeth's corruption and fall. Banquo's allusion points to the Bible, and that Scriptural text contains a very clear meaning. Shortly following Banquo's first allusion is the second biblical reference at 1.3.123-126, cited in the paragraph above, identified by Shaheen as "certain" (623), in which Banquo warns Macbeth in an aside, after having heard from Ross and Angus of Macbeth's promotion, about trusting in the veracity and goodness of prophecies uttered by agents of evil such as the witches appear to be.

Shaheen assigns Banquo's second allusion to 2 Corinthians 11.14: "And no marueile: for Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of light" (Geneva 86).<sup>138</sup> Here, Banquo is confirming the assertion contained in his first allusion, that the witches are manifesting the spirit of the devil, and at the same time he is warning Macbeth that what appears to be the truth is perhaps a deception. Now, the deception of Satan, who is able to so transform himself, is compared by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:3 with the Fall of Adam and Eve: "But I feare lest as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtiltie, so your minds shulde be corrupte from the simplicitie that is in Christ" (Geneva 86). And then, later at 2 Corinthians 11:13, Paul warns the Corinthians about false apostles who are "deceitful workers, and transforme themselves into the Apostles of Christ" (Geneva 86). These same false apostles are compared to Satan at 2 Corinthians 11:15: "Therefore it is no great thing, thogh his ministers transforme themselves, as thogh they were the ministers of righteousness, whose end shalbe according to their works" (Geneva 86). The biblical context here encourages some latitude in the consideration of deception to include not just Satan's ability to deceive, but also that of his delegates as well. Just as Christians are warned by Paul in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, so Macbeth is warned by Banquo by reminding him that the devil's agents sometimes employ partial truth to bind their victims to greater error; and where a warning is given, culpability can be assigned. By acquiescing to the deception of the witches even after being warned by Banquo, Macbeth moves ever closer to resembling Antichrist in that he freely opens his will to darkness, and thereby takes on the shade of Satan. Of course, for the sake of intellectual coherence, it must be repeated here that Macbeth, like Richard III before him, is *a* son of the devil, and therefore a *figura* of Antichrist, not *the* son, a position reserved for the end-time tyrant.

In addition to the direct reference to Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Shaheen notes a biblical reference to Matthew 4:1-10 in Banquo's warning to Macbeth about the "instruments of darkness," just after they have learned that Macbeth has been made Thane of Cawdor. The gospel narrates of Christ's temptation by the devil after his sojourn of forty days and nights of fasting in the desert.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> The Bishops' Bible is the same with slight variation in spelling, while the Rheims varies only by the word "transfigureth" in place of "transformed." It is not possible to tell which variant Shakespeare had in mind.

<sup>139</sup> Shaheen also notes Luke 4.1-12 (See appendix), which is substantially the same as Matthew 4.1-10, except that the pinnacle temptation and the mountain temptation are reversed in Luke.

Again, the devil toke him up unto an exceeding high mountaine, and shewed him all the Kingdoms of the worlde, and the glorie of them.

And said to him, All these wil I give thee, if thou wilt fall downe, and worship me.

Then said Jesus unto him, Avoide Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him onely shalt thou serve. (Matt. 4:8-10, Geneva 3)<sup>140</sup>

The allusion to the temptation of Christ in the desert, as previously observed in the chapter on *Richard III*, is significant because it exemplifies the difference between Christ's defeat of the devil, and the Shakespearean protagonist's, here Macbeth's, defeat by the devil. Indeed, it is on the blasted heath, a type of desert or wilderness, that Macbeth encounters the agents of Satan. But in addition to the use of contrast, the allusion also signifies the importance of identity: the devil is questioning Christ's identity, whether he is the Son of God, and whither his proof. Christ does not respond to the provocation but remains serene in the possession of truth; and, instead of taking the bait, as Macbeth tragically does in his encounter with the witches, Christ turns the tables on his adversary by refuting Satan with the very instrument the devil employs, that is, Scripture. A Geneva gloss, "g," on the temptation scene in Matthew 4:7, in which Christ rebukes the devil with the Scriptural commandment, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matt. 4:7, Geneva 3) interprets the meaning as, "we must not leave suche lawful meanes as God hath appointed, to seke others after our own fantasie" (Matt. 4:7, Geneva 3). The insight available to Shakespeare's biblically literate audience would have been a recognition that Macbeth was guilty of following his own vain imagining (i.e., "own fantasie") without due regard for the commandments of God.

### 3.5 Sacrilige in the Temple

The enormity of the guilt Macbeth and his wife feel for their murder of Duncan has its origin in the meaning that the New Testament bequeaths on the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Biblically speaking, the shed blood of God's representatives at the hands of their enemies on earth is a sacrilege because it signifies the desecration of God's temple, the exemplary model being Christ the King who, from the Christian perspective, is the actual temple of God on earth.<sup>141</sup> In as much

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<sup>140</sup> The Bishops' Bible is substantially the same, while the Rheims substitutes the word "Avant" for Geneva's "Avoide." Therefore it cannot be determined which version Shakespeare had in mind.

<sup>141</sup> The Christian doctrine for the assertion that Jesus Christ is the temple of God derives in part from the Gospel of John 2:19-21, in which Christ himself explains to his enemies the proposition: "Jesus answered and said unto them,



as Duncan is a representative of Christ the King, the Lord's anointed, his despoiled body is tantamount to the defilement of God's temple, particularly from the perspective of his subjects. It is probably the reason why Macbeth cannot say "Amen," why it sticks in his throat even though he has "most need of blessing" (2.2.31-32), after having murdered Duncan; it is likely the same reason why Lady Macbeth cannot rid herself of the "damned spot" (5.1.38) and wonders "will these hands ne'er be clean?" (5.1.46). The blood shed by Macbeth, specifically the blood of Duncan, the anointed king<sup>142</sup> whose murder is a sacrilege according to Macduff (2.3.69-71), takes on a profoundly religious significance when considered in the light of Paul's theological explication of Christ's shed blood in his Epistle to the Colossians. In Colossians, Paul is expounding on the claim that Christians have been freed "from the power of darkenes" (Col. 1:14, Geneva 83), and that they have entered into the kingdom of God: "In whome we have redemption through his blood" (Col. 1:14, Geneva 83). The blood referred to here is, of course, Christ's. It is primarily due to the reputed sacrality of kingship that Duncan shares, to a lesser degree because he is not actually a divine person but rather a mere human being, in Christ's subjection to sacrilege; and this notion is given substance by Macduff's plaintive cry at 2.3.69-71, yet another "certain" allusion identified by Shaheen: "Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope/The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence/The life o' th' building." The use of the words "sacrilege," and "Lord's anointed temple" in conjunction with the act of stealing, points to an association between Duncan's murder and the biblical Abomination of Desolation.<sup>143</sup> By killing the anointed king, Macbeth has made "nought", or desolate, the life of the building, the temple of God. Shaheen compares the allusion to Revelation 11.19: "Then the Temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seene in the Temple the Arke of his covenant"<sup>144</sup> (Shaheen 629). According to Shaheen, "the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies, the most sacred article in the temple, can be aptly described as "the life o' th' building" (630). Shaheen also comments that Macduff's allusion refers to the "human body as a temple" (630), an idea noted previously on

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Destroye this temple, and in thre days I wil raise it up againe. Then said the Jewes, Fortie and six years was this Temple a buylding, and wilt thou reare it up in thre days? But he spake of the temple of his bodie" (John 2: 19-21, Geneva 43).

<sup>142</sup> Bloch succinctly explains the derivation of the phrase "the Lord's anointed": "to use the biblical expression, kings had become the 'Lord's Anointed', protected from all the machinations of the wicked by the divine word, for God himself had said: 'Touch not mine anointed' (38).

<sup>143</sup> Daniel 9.27, 11.31, and 12.11. See also, Matthew 24.15-16, and Mark 13.14.

<sup>144</sup> The Bishops' Bible and the Rheims New Testament are substantially the same, and so it is not possible to determine which variant Shakespeare used.

page sixteen in the chapter on *Richard III*, and backed up here by Shaheen with references to John 2.19-21, 1 Corinthians 3.17; 6.19; and 2 Corinthians 6.16.<sup>145</sup>

What Shakespeare is alluding to is the Christian assertion that the redeemed human being is the temple of God. The notion of the redeemed creature as temple of God is superlatively exemplified in the case of an anointed king such as Duncan who represents the regal aspect of Christ the King on earth<sup>146</sup>. It makes sense, from the preceding assertion, that the slaughter of an anointed king would take on the aspect of a religious crime, as is borne out by Macduff's reaction in identifying the homicide with the eschatological exclamation, "look on death itself!" (2.3.79). Shaheen identifies Macduff's alarm, cited previously on page seventy-three, at 2.3.77-79: "Up, up, and see/The great doom's image! Malcolm! Banquo!/As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites" (Shaheen 630), with what he calls "a general reference to the day of judgement. . . a replica of Doomsday" (630). But, Shaheen also compares the allusion to Revelation 20.12-13: "I sawe the dead, both great and small stand before God"<sup>147</sup> (630), and John 5.28-29: "All that are in the graves, shal heare his voice. And they shal come foorth" (631)<sup>148</sup>. Of significance for the premise of this chapter is the biblical fate of the common enemies of man, the devil, the beast [Antichrist], and the false prophet: "And the devil that deceived them, was cast into a lake of fyre & brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet shalbe tormented even day and night for evermore" (Rev. 9:20, Geneva 121). Macduff's allusion

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<sup>145</sup> John 2.19-21: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroye this temple, and in thre days I will raise it up againe" (Geneva 43). 1 Corinthians 3.17: "If any man destroy the Temple of God, him shal God destroy: for the Temple of God is holie, which ye are" (Geneva 77). 2 Corinthians 6.16: "And what agreement hathe the Temple of God with idoles? for ye are the Temple of the living God: as God hathe said, I wil dwel among them, and walke there: and I will be their God, and they shalbe my people" (Geneva 85).

<sup>146</sup> For an historical explanation on the divine character of the anointed king in England see Bloch's *The Royal Touch*, which gives the origin of the miraculous healing power attributed to king's in the medieval era and up until the early modern era: "Edward the Confessor is still almost universally considered today as the founder of the English rite. This tradition is all the weightier because Shakespeare, drawing as usual upon Holinshed, made it his own, in one of his most famous and most widely-read plays. In *Macbeth*, Malcolm and Macduff, fleeing from the hatred of the Scottish tyrant, take refuge in the court of Edward the Confessor, where Malcolm becomes the astonished witness of the miracle" (23). See also Bloch: "Thus the monarchies of Western Europe, already heirs to long years of veneration, found themselves definitively stamped with a divine seal, which they were to bear for ever" (41).

<sup>147</sup> The Bishops' version employs the same phrase as the Geneva Bible, while the Rheims variant has "And I saw the dead, great and little, standing in the sight of the throne" (563). Because the reference is general, there is no way to determine if Shakespeare had one version or the other in mind.

<sup>148</sup> The Bishops' version is the same as the Geneva, while the Rheims is substantially the same. It is not possible, especially since Shaheen suggests only a general reference, to determine which variant Shakespeare may have had in mind.

to Revelation would imply, by analogy, Macbeth's fate, because the "great doom's image," an apocalyptic reference, is clearly related to Macbeth's earlier vision of the "horrid image" of the murder of the anointed king, Duncan, an act of sacrilege foreseen by himself, for which he is to be held accountable by divine justice, just as God's adversaries are in Revelation. The reference to John 5:29 that Shaheen points out further affirms the theme of judgement: "And they shall come forth, that have done good, unto the resurrection of life: but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of condemnation" (Geneva 45), confirming Macbeth's shared fate with the enemies of God.

### 3.6 The Gates of Hell

In confirmation of the analogy between Macbeth's fate and that of his biblical counterpart, is Shaheen's identification of the Porter scene at 2.3.18-19 as a "certain" allusion: "That go the primrose way to th' everlasting bonfire" (Shaheen 629). This is the famous comic scene in which the Porter encounters Macduff and Lennox knocking at the Gate of Macbeth's castle shortly after the murder of Duncan. The Porter's speech reveals the now hellish atmosphere of Macbeth's castle, previously referred to by Duncan himself as a castle that "hath a pleasant seat, the air/Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself/Unto our gentle senses" (1.6.1-3), and by Banquo who comments that "the heaven's breath/Smells wooingly here" (1.6.5-6). But after Macbeth's heinous act of regicide, Shakespeare's Porter now employs descriptions that bespeak the Christian netherworld in relation to the castle. He refers variously to "hell gate" (2.3.2), "Beelzebub" (2.3.4), "an equivocator" (2.3.11), "roast your goose" (2.3.15), "too cold for hell" (2.3.17), "devil porter" (2.3.17-18), and finally to "everlasting bonfire" (2.3.20). Macbeth's castle is now a reflection of the abomination of desolation that has marked his soul. Shaheen, in reference to the porter's speech, cites these phrases: Matthew 7.13: "It is the wide gate, and broad way that leadeth to destruction: and many there be which goe in thereat";<sup>149</sup> Matthew 18.8: "Be cast into everlasting fire";<sup>150</sup> Revelation 20.10: "Was cast into a lake of fire and . . .

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<sup>149</sup> The Bishops' version is substantially the same as the Geneva, while the Rheims version is similar but uses the word "large" instead of "wide," and the syntax is slightly different. There is no way to determine which version Shakespeare had in mind.

<sup>150</sup> Both the Bishops' and Rheims versions employ the same phrase "everlasting fire" making the discovery of which version Shakespeare used inconclusive.

shalbe tormented even day and night for evermore;<sup>151</sup> Revelation 20.15: “And whosoever was not founde written in the booke of life, was cast into the lake of fyre”;<sup>152</sup> and, finally, The Wisdome of Salomon, 2.7-8: “Let us fil our selves with costly wine and oyntments, and let not the floure of life passe by us. Let us crowne our selves with rose buddes afore they be withered” (629).<sup>153</sup> Besides adding some comic relief after the dire scene of Duncan’s murder, Shakespeare indirectly signifies that Macbeth’s castle is now permeated no longer with “heaven’s breath” (1.6.5), but instead with the sulphurous flames of hell, as indicated in the Porter’s speech:

I had thought to have let in  
some of all professions that go the primrose way  
to th’ everlasting bonfire. (2.3.18-20)

In a figurative sense, then, the Porter has become the keeper of Hell’s gate; and Macbeth and his wife, the chief demons of this hell.

The first allusion cited by Shaheen, in reference to lines 2.3.18-19, is to Matt. 7.13, which speaks to the Christian moral law,<sup>154</sup> a law that Macbeth has trampled; that moral law is known as the golden rule, and is usually expressed as: *do unto others as you would have them do unto you*, or put another way, *love your neighbour as yourself*:

Therefore whatsoever ye wolde that men shulde do to you, even so do yet to them: for this is the Law and the Prophetes.  
Enter in at the streicte gate: for it’s the wide gate, and broad waye that leadeth to destruction: and manie there be which go in there at. (Geneva 5)

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<sup>151</sup> Again, it is impossible to determine which version Shakespeare used because they are all substantially the same, except that the Rheims version uses the word “pool” instead of “lake.”

<sup>152</sup> Here again, the Rheims version employs the phrase “pool of fire” instead of “lake of fire” but the conclusion as to which variant Shakespeare used remains indeterminant.

<sup>153</sup> The Bishops’ Bible does not include the Apocrypha, and therefore lacks the passage from Wisdom, whereas the Douay Old Testament was not available until at least 1610 meaning Shakespeare more than likely had the Geneva in mind for this allusion.

<sup>154</sup> The “Golden Rule” of Jesus Christ can be found in Matthew 7:12: “Therefore whatsoever ye wolde that men shulde do to you, even so do ye to them: for this is the Law and the Prophetes” (Matt. 7:12, Geneva 5). It can also be found in Luke 6:31: And as ye wolde than men shulde do to you, so do ye to them likewise” (Lk. 6:31, Geneva 30).

A gloss (“d”) in Geneva on the phrase, “streicte gate,” warns the reader that “We must overcome and mortifie our affections, if we wil be true disciples of Christ.” Clearly, Macbeth fails to restrain his passion for the throne. A second gloss (“c”) on “wide gate, and broad” concludes “For the most parte of men seke their owne libertie, and runne headlong to evil.”

If the first reference to Matthew identified by Shaheen speaks to Macbeth’s passion, his lack of restraint, and the consequent punishment, then Shaheen’s denomination of Revelation 20:10 (629), the divine punishment of the devil, Antichrist and his False prophet, as an object of the Porter’s allusion to “th’ everlasting bonfire,” at 2.3.20, upholds this chapter’s contention that Macbeth is a *figura*, in the imaginative, literary sense, of Antichrist:

And the devil that deceived them, was cast into a lake of fyre & brimstone, where the beast [Antichrist] and the false prophet shalbe tormented even day and night evermore.  
(Geneva 121)

As the preeminent head of the reprobate, Antichrist is particularly associated with “th’ everlasting bonfire” where he will be joined by his right-hand man, the False prophet, and his spiritual father, Satan. As the lord of the castle, Macbeth has already walked the “primrose path,” and the everlasting fires of hell accompany him on the rest of his journey toward death. The second reference to Revelation that Shaheen notes, Revelation 20:15, affirms the commonality of Macbeth as just another *figura* of Antichrist, not the final monster himself, but an adversary of God nevertheless in the mould of Antichrist: “And whosoever was not found written in the booke of life, was cast into the lake of fyre” (Geneva 121).

The last reference identified by Shaheen arising out of the Porter’s allusion to the primrose path, at 2.3.19, is The Wisdome of Salomon 2:7-8:

Let us fill our selves with costlie wine and ointments, and let not the floure of life pass by us.

Let us crowne our selves with rose buddes afore they be withered. (Geneva 418)

The general intent of this chapter in The Wisdome of Salomon is, as its own heading makes clear, to delineate “the imaginacions and desires of the wicked, & their counsel against the faithful” (Geneva 418). Once again, the idea being communicated here is that Macbeth belongs

squarely in the camp of the wicked in that he has decided to “jump the life to come” (1.7.7), to live for the day, and to seize his self-appointed rewards in this life in scornful disregard of the next. What is really important about this chapter in *Wisdom* for the discussion of Macbeth as a literary *figura* of the ultimate biblical villain is that the passage fortuitously, from the perspective of this thesis at least, delineates the philosophy of Antichrist. Such a philosophy consists in pursuing one’s happiness in this world to the exclusion of the claims of God, the same philosophy articulated by Macbeth later in the play upon hearing of his wife’s suicide, wherein he laments “Life’s but a walking shadow” (5.5.24). It is of paramount importance to the central argument of this present chapter on *Macbeth* to cite a portion of *The Wisdom of Salomon* 2, so as to compare the despair at life’s ephemeral nature, attributed here to the “ungodlie,” with Macbeth’s sad lamentation at the meaninglessness of life. It is also important to take special notice of the justification for evil given here in this passage from *Wisdom* as it relates to Macbeth’s philosophy because it identifies that philosophy, a relativist, materialist one at that, with Antichrist, or at least the forces aligned with Antichrist:

For the ungodlie say, as they falsely imagine with them selves, Our life is shorte and tedious: and in the death of a man there is no recoverie, nether was any knowen that hathe returned from the grave. . .

For our time is as a shadow that passeth away, and after our end there is no returning: for it is all fast sealed, so that no man cometh againe. . .

Let us crowne our selves with rose buddes afore they be withered. . .

Let us oppresse the poore, that is righteous: let us not spare the widowe, nor reverence the white heeres of the aged, that have lived many yeres.

Let our strength be the lawe of unrighteousness: for the things that is feble, is reprovod as unprofitable.

Therefore let us defraude the righteous: for he is not for our profite, & he is contrarie to our doings: he checketh us for offending against the Lawe, and blameth us as transgressours of discipline.

He maketh his boaste to have the knowledge of God, and he calleth him self the sonne of the Lorde. (*The Wisdom of Salomon* 2:1-13, Geneva 418)

The first thing to be noted is the marked similarity to Macbeth's speech after Lady Macbeth's suicide at 5.5, especially with regards to the impermanency and meaninglessness of life:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow  
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
 To the last syllable of recorded time;  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
 that struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
 And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
 Signifying nothing. (5.5.19-28)

The note of despair, arising from the absence of an apprehension of the true, or eternal, good, is evident in both the text from *The Wisdom of Solomon* and in Macbeth's speech. The idea of life being but a shadow and coming to nothing upon death is common to both texts. Life is "tedious" in the *Wisdom* text and "petty" in *Macbeth*. Life is a "shadow" in *Wisdom*, and a "walking shadow" in *Macbeth*. In *Wisdom*, after death, no man "cometh againe," and in *Macbeth* he "is heard no more." There is also evident a sneering contempt for the "feble" in *Wisdom* that is similar to *Macbeth's* disdain for "fools," a cynical philosophy critiqued by both the biblical and Shakespearean texts. The solution for the "ungodlie" of *Wisdom* is to seek the rewards of this life, to "crown ourselves with roses," a solution that is similar to Macbeth's desire to "jump the life to come" and seek the crown of the king, no matter the cost. The relevance of *The Wisdom of Solomon* text to *Macbeth* is startling in that it parallels Macbeth's own philosophy, and it identifies that philosophy with the enemies of Christ, who are both the body of the reprobate, *figuras* of Antichrist (such as is Macbeth in his literary incarnation), and Antichrist himself.

### 3.7

### The Judas Factor

Another means by which Shakespeare associates Macbeth through allusion with the *figura* of Antichrist is to hint at a correspondence between the despised betrayer of Christ in the Gospels,

Judas,<sup>155</sup> and Macbeth. By having Macbeth speak words redolent of Christ's at the Last Supper, Shakespeare not only exposes the divided soul of Macbeth, but he also suggests the means by which Macbeth is transformed into a *figura* of the final global tyrant. The scene takes place during what amounts to the "last supper" for King Duncan at Macbeth's castle. Macbeth has absented himself from the table to agonize, in soliloquy, over whether or not he should be the instrument of Duncan's demise, weighing the consequences to himself in light of Duncan's well-known virtues, a king who has "borne his faculties so meek" (1.7.17), a description reminiscent of Christ.<sup>156</sup> At the beginning of Macbeth's probing soliloquy into the rationale for killing Duncan at 1.7.1-28, Shakespeare creates ironic distance by way of a Scriptural allusion, identified as "certain" by Shaheen (625): "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well/It were done quickly" (1.7.1-2). Shaheen references John 13:27 in the Geneva Bible, a scene in which Jesus speaks to Judas just before the betrayer leaves the last supper: "That thou doest, do quickly" (625). Considering the previous verses, the association of Macbeth with Judas the betrayer of Christ suggests that the diabolic spirit has supplanted the Spirit of God in the temple of Macbeth's person prior to his awful crime; indeed such an idea would be more transparent to those familiar with John's gospel passage on the Last Supper, a passage that includes Judas' possession by the devil, and which immediately precedes the allusion identified by Shaheen at 1.7.1-2:

When Jesus had said these things, he was troubled in the Spirit, & testified, and said,  
Verely, verily I say unto you, that one of you shal betraye me.  
Then the disciples looked one on another, douting of whome he spake.  
Now there was one of his disciples, who leaned on Jesus besome, whome Jesus loved.  
He then, as he leaned on Jesus brest, said unto him, Lord, who is it?  
Jesus answered, He it is, to whome I shal give a soppe, when I have dipte it: and he wet a  
soppe, and gave it to Judas Iscariot, Simons sonne.  
And after the soppe, Satan entered into him. (John 13:21-27, Geneva 50)

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<sup>155</sup> Emerson contends that Judas was a figure of Antichrist from the early days of Christianity: "The New Testament and early church types of Antichrist include further famous opponents of God and his church. Judas, the great hypocrite and traitor, symbolizes Antichrist's hostility to Christ in the last days" (27).

<sup>156</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:1: "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness, & gentleness of Christ" (Geneva 85).



The salient factor to remember about Judas is that he was fully possessed by Satan, a phenomenon that enabled him to betray the Son of God. And finally, Judas ended his life in a state of despair. Macbeth shares in common with Richard III a final state of despair induced by the betrayal of God (in the sense of refusing Christ's redemption) as manifested in a malicious and pertinacious denial of conscience, as discussed previously in this chapter from pages sixteen to nineteen. Like Judas, Macbeth plays the hypocrite, as exemplified in the scene in which he capitulates to his wife's plot to kill King Duncan when he says "I am settled, and bend up/Each corporal agent to this terrible feat. . . /False face must hide what the false heart doth know" (1.7.79-82). Furthermore, when contemplating the witches' prophecy concerning Banquo and his line, Macbeth admits he has given his "eternal jewel" to the "common enemy of man" (3.1.68-69) by murdering Duncan, and that thought causes him to fulminate against the prospect of Banquo's seed resulting in a long line of kings. Replete with spite at the thought of Banquo's descendants, Macbeth, in an act of insane hubris, challenges fate itself to prevent such an occurrence. And so, Macbeth's denial of conscience perdures throughout the entire drama from his initial encounter with the witches to his decision to kill Macduff's "wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls/That trace him in his line" (4.1.153-154), until, his enemies at the gate of his castle, Macbeth laments "I have supped full with horrors./Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,/Cannot once start me" (5.5. 12-13). What is new here, and intriguing to say the least, is the idea, suggested by Shakespeare's allusion to Judas, that Macbeth too undergoes demonic possession at the threshold of an egregious act of regicide. The Satanic possession of Judas is a diabolical parody of the relationship between Christ and God the Father; for as Christ admits that he can do nothing apart from the Father<sup>157</sup>, and that he does the same things as the Father because of the love between them (i.e., the Holy Spirit),<sup>158</sup> so Judas could not betray Christ until

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<sup>157</sup> John 5:19-20: "Then answered Jesus, & said unto them, Verely, verily I say unto you, The Sonne can do nothing of him self, save that he seeth the Father do: for whatsoever things he doeth, the same things doeth the Sonne also./For the Father loveth the Sonne, & sheweth him all things, whatsoever he himself doeth" (Geneva 44).

<sup>158</sup> Irenaeus explains the meaning of sonship, both in its natural and supernatural sense: "Since, therefore, all things were made by God, and since the devil has become the cause of apostasy to himself and others, justly does the Scripture always term those who remain in a state of apostasy "sons of the devil" and "angels of he wicked one" (*maligni*). For [the word] "son," as one before me has observed, has a twofold meaning: one [is a son] in the order of nature, because he was born a son; the other, in that he was made so, is reputed a son, although there be a difference between being born so and being made so. For the first is indeed born from the person referred to; but the second is made so by him, whether as respects his creation or by the teaching of his doctrine. For when any person has been taught from the mouth of another, he is termed the son of him who instructs him, and the latter [is called] his father. According to nature, then, that is, according to creation, so to speak—we are all sons of

he was fully possessed by Satan's spirit— "after the soppe, Satan entered into him."<sup>159</sup> So, too, Macbeth cannot murder Duncan until he is fully enthralled to the spirit of darkness. Macbeth's soliloquy, following upon his allusion to the betrayal of Christ, is nothing less than an exposition of Macbeth's univocal and circumscribed concern for the things of this world, evident even in his conflicted argument against the proposed murder of Duncan:

Besides, this Duncan  
 Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
 So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
 Will plead like angels trumpet-tongued against  
 The deep damnation of his taking off;  
 And pity, like a naked newborn babe,  
 Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin horsed  
 Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
 Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
 That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur  
 To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
 Vaulting ambition, which o'leaps itself  
 And falls on th' other. (1.7.2-28)

It may appear at first blush that Macbeth is touching on his own belief in metaphysical realities in the lines, "Will plead like angels trumpet-tongued against/The deep damnation of his taking off," but in actuality, he is merely employing poetic eloquence at the service of self-concern. Macbeth's concern is not with Duncan's eternal destiny, nor indeed his own, but with the political repercussions of killing the anointed king as evinced by his concern that the assassination "shall blow the horrid deed in every eye/That tears shall drown the wind."

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God, because we have all been created by God. But with respect to obedience and doctrine we are not all the sons of God: those only are so who believe in Him and do His will. And those who do not believe, and do not obey His will, are sons and angels of the devil, because they do the works of the devil" (525).

<sup>159</sup> This is implied by the fact that Satan entered into Judas immediately before Jesus said to him "That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27, Geneva 50). See also Aquinas: "The Father delivered up Christ, and Christ surrendered Himself, from charity, and consequently we give praise to both: but Judas betrayed Christ from greed" (ST Pt. III Q. 47 Art. 4, p. 2274). Now if greed is the love of money, as it clearly was in Judas' case, and the love of money is the root of all evil as Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:10, then Judas' inordinate desire led him captive to Satan, as Macbeth's inordinate desire also leads him captive to diabolic darkness.

Confessing a greater concern for the judgement of his fellow creatures than for God's prohibition against murder, Macbeth is worried more about how the powers of heaven ("cherubin") might make him look bad in comparison to virtuous Duncan. Macbeth, upon uttering the word "other," immediately encounters his wife, now an instrument of darkness herself after welcoming "spirits that tend on mortal thoughts" (1.5.41). Lady Macbeth has asked those spirits, "murd'ring ministers" (1.5.49), to fill her "from the crown to the toe, top-full of direst cruelty!" (1.5.43). Through his wife's infectious enthusiasm for murder Macbeth is relieved of his vain fear of failure, and comes to partake of the same spirit possessing his wife. As Milward argues, Macbeth "has given his full consent to the temptation of evil, knowing it to be evil. He has cut himself off from his kinsmen and sovereign, and from the company of good men, preferring to remain with his wife, who has already given herself over to those 'spirits that tend on mortal thoughts'" (232). Macbeth even commends his wife on her prodigious lack of mercy: "Bring forth men-children only;/For thy undaunted mettle should compose/Nothing but males" (1.7.72-73). By a process of sympathetic osmosis, Macbeth adopts the demonic intelligence embraced by his wife, the spirit of primeval falsehood that Christ insists is conjoined to murder (John 8:44). Having imbibed, metaphorically, the self-same spirit dwelling in his wife, Macbeth, now a figurative son of the devil, readily adopts the guise of dissimulation, and this is so because, in parodic imitation of Scripture, the son must do the things that the father does: "Then answered Jesus, & said unto them, Verely, verily, I say unto you, The Sonne can do nothing of himself, save that he seeth the Father do: for whatsoever things he doeth, the same things doeth the Sone also" (John 5:19, Geneva 44). Since Macbeth is here posited as a *figura* of Antichrist, who parodies Christ by replicating his actions, but with regard to his own father, Satan, rather than God, it follows that Macbeth must become a deceiver as Antichrist is a deceiver who imitates the Father of lies, Satan. Hence, Macbeth, willingly possessed now by the same demonic spirit as his wife, declares,<sup>160</sup> "False face must hide what the false heart doth know" (1.7.82). Here Shakespeare

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<sup>160</sup> *Rheims New Testament* annotation 17 to chapter 13 of The Apocalypse of Saint John: "The character or the name.] As belike for the perverse imitation of Christ, whose image (specially as on the Rood or crucifix) he seeth honored and exalted in every Church, he will have his image adored (for this is Antichrist, in emulation of like honor, adversary to Christ's) so for that he seeth all true Christian men to bear the badge of his Cross in their foreheads, he likewise will force all his to have another mark, to abolish the sign of Christ. By the like emulation also and wicked opposition he will have his name and the letters thereof to be sacred, and to be worn in mens caps, or written in solemn places, and to be worshipped as the name of JESUS is and ought to be among Christian men" (552).

reveals the continuing transformation of Macbeth into a *figura* of Antichrist through his strong association with Judas, a noted type of Antichrist as discussed on page twelve of this chapter. In Matthew, Mark and John, Judas is possessed by the devil immediately upon leaving the Last Supper so as to betray Christ.<sup>161</sup> As well, Scripture alludes to Antichrist's demonic possession in several passages as noted on page thirteen of the introduction to this thesis.

### 3.8 The Last Trump (1 Cor. 15:52)

Immediately preceding his acquiescence to Lady Macbeth's sanguinary spirit, Macbeth evokes, through verbal imagery, an apocalyptic atmosphere befitting the sacrilegious crime he is contemplating. Within the body of Macbeth's soliloquy at 1.7.19, a scene in which he is agonizing over the prospect of murdering the good king Duncan, Shaheen locates a "certain" biblical allusion in the line, "Will plead like Angels, trumpet-tongu'd" (626), which he attributes to several passages in Scripture beginning with Revelation 8.2: "And I sawe the seven Angels, which stode before God, and to them were given seven trumpettes" (Geneva 117);<sup>162</sup> as well as Revelation 8.6: "Then the seven Angels, which had the seven trumpettes, prepared themselves to blowe the trumpettes" (Geneva 117);<sup>163</sup> and Matthew 24.31: "He shall sende his Angels with a great sounde of a trumpet" (Geneva 14).<sup>164</sup> The angels of Revelation blow their trumpets from chapter 8 to chapter 11 to herald specific events as Shaheen remarks (626), and these events are punishments inflicted through nature on man by God for unrepented sin, which in the passage in Matthew are referred to as tribulations (Geneva 14). The sound of the angels' trumpets signals not only the punishment of unrepentant sinners, but it also heralds the gathering of Christ's elect.

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<sup>161</sup> It is only in Luke 22:3 that Judas is possessed by the devil before the last supper: "Then entered Satan into Judas, who was called Iscariot, and was of the number of the twelve" (Geneva 40).

<sup>162</sup> The Bishops' and the Rheims versions are so similar to the Geneva as to warrant very little distinction such that it is not possible to determine whether Shakespeare had one or the other variant in mind.

<sup>163</sup> Again, the difference between the Geneva, the Bishops' and the Rheims is so insignificant that it is impossible to determine which variant Shakespeare had in mind. Instead of the word "blow," which is used in both the Geneva and the Bishops' Bible, the Rheims uses the word "sound." All that can be said in the way of conjecture is that the word "sound" is more often used in association with the word "tongue," so that "trumpet-tongu'd" may have arisen more readily from a reading of the Rheims than from the other two variants.

<sup>164</sup> The Bishops' version repeats the same phrase as the Geneva, "And he shall sende his Angels with the greate sounde of a trumpet." The Rheims version, however, is "And he shall send his Angels with a trumpet, and a great voice." So, once again, the Rheims variant uses a word more associated with "tongue" as in Shakespeare's "trumpet-tongu'd," that is, the quality of "voice" is almost incomprehensible without the concomitant action of a "tongue" giving rise to it. Therefore, all that can be said from this is that linguistic deduction lends some weight to the speculation that Shakespeare may have recollected a reading of the Rheims version in constructing this particular allusion.

Of particular interest for the premise of this chapter are the lines in Revelation 9.20-21, which are relevant by virtue of Shaheen's inclusion of chapters 8 to 11 in his discussion of the allusion:

And the remnant of the men which were not killed by these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands that they shulde not worship devils, and idoles of golde and of silver, and of brasse, and of stone, and of wood, which nether can se, neither heare nor go. Also they repented not of their murther, and their sorcerie, nether of their fornicacion, nor of their theft. (Geneva 117)

In Revelation, the angels' trumpets herald the great plagues poured out upon an unrepentant, sinful mankind. Because Macbeth covets the crown of Duncan in despite of the destiny of his immortal soul,<sup>165</sup> he is guilty of a multitude of sins as discussed on pages thirteen to fourteen of the introduction. First, Macbeth is guilty of both idolatry and murder; because he must assassinate Duncan to obtain the crown. Because he believes the witches, even conjures them, and later, their diabolic masters, Macbeth is guilty of sorcery. Because he dabbles in sorcery with the witches, Macbeth is guilty of spiritual promiscuity or fornication. And finally, because he usurps Duncan's throne, Macbeth is guilty of theft, a sin strongly associated by Christianity with Judas, a *figura* of Antichrist, as previously discussed on pages 34 to 37. In other words, Macbeth is cut from the same cloth as Paul's *man of sinne*, who is a composite of all of the Scriptural references to Antichrist; he is, like Antichrist, a *sonne of perdition*. Evil, once given ingress, envelops the whole person of Macbeth. At the end of the play, he is described metaphorically as a "hell-hound" (5.8.4), a description he shares in common with Richard III (4.4.48).

Having identified the allusions that pertain to Antichrist, and having ascertained their relevance to the dramatic character of Macbeth, it is time to discuss the philosophical mechanism by which the allusions can be understood. Although the allusion identified by Shaheen does not include the preceding line, "So clear in his great office, that his virtues"<sup>166</sup> ["Will plead like angels trumpet-tongued"], spoken by Macbeth in reference to Duncan, the words are of significance because they lend credence to Beauregard's analysis of Shakespeare's method. Recalling Beauregard's contention that Shakespeare's dramatic universe included not just an examination of human

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<sup>165</sup> *Macbeth*: "We'd jump the life to come" (1.7.7).

<sup>166</sup> Followed by: "Will plead like angels trumpet-tongued against/The deep damnation of his taking off" (1.7.19-20).

passion (an Aristotelian perspective), but also a living portrait of the contrast between particular virtues and their opposing vices (a Thomistic perspective), it is clear that Duncan's virtues represent for Macbeth (and Shakespeare's audience) a stark contrast to his own vices, which are associated with apocalyptic imagery in keeping with the premise of this chapter. Beauregard's argument is that Shakespeare's plays are not overtly didactic, as were, for instance, the late Medieval morality plays; but, rather through the imitation of human action, the plays elevate our understanding of human nature:

First of all, in the literary context established by Sidney's *Apology*, the Shakespearean poetic is primarily mimetic and imitative rather than thematically didactic. Second, the objects of that mimesis can be found in the passions, virtues and vices as they are described and delineated in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition of moral philosophy, which is the proper frame of interpretive reference for some ten of Shakespeare's works. Finally, the combinations and clusters of these virtues and vices explain our modern fragmentary intuitions with a more comprehensive extension and enable us to see in the plays a greater unity. (187)

Beauregard's analysis is not all that far from Barroll's, discussed in the previous chapter on *Richard III*. Barroll advanced a concept he termed "Renaissance transcendentalism" to describe the vision through which dramatists such as Shakespeare viewed the world, a vision that included the invisible supernatural and its relation to human aspirations, a vision that ultimately allowed Shakespeare, according to Barroll, to explore the depths of human personality without the inartistic constraint of the straight-jacket of homiletic:

To be a maker in the medieval sense or a poet in the Greek sense that Sidney understood, the playwright ultimately had to construct something in the way of a process according to which humans were describable not through the evaluation of archetypes but through their aspirations to their individual goals. (254)

Beyond the identity of Macbeth's actual passion, however, what Beauregard and Barroll contribute to the general understanding of Shakespeare's dramatic *modus operandi* is that the motivation of his characters is rooted in the desire for good. It can be argued that no one acts for

an evil end,<sup>167</sup> because as Aquinas explains in the *Summa Theologica*, sometimes the good that a person desires is not a true good: “The good view of which one acts is not always a true good; but sometimes it is a true good, sometimes an apparent good. And in the latter event, an evil action results from the end in view” (St, Pt. I-II Q. 18 Art. 4, p. 665). Ultimately, the dramatic problem, or conflict, arises when the good desired is revealed to be an apparent good, and not the real (or true) good,<sup>168</sup> a value that, in contrast to the apparent good, is always intangible because spiritual, such as is love, peace, forgiveness, or repentance. The element, then, that keeps Shakespeare’s characters from being mere allegories, cardboard cut-outs for the virtues or vices, like some kind of sophisticated morality play, is the universal but also ever-particular desire for good. And what Shakespeare does with this insight in *Macbeth* is to create one of the most poetic villains in all literature, a villain who eloquently expresses the deep disappointment, growing to despair, of having pursued an apparent good, the “fruitless crown” (3.1.61), the usurpation of Duncan’s throne, at the expense of his “eternal jewel,” the irrecoverable loss of true good. Ironically, Macbeth himself summarizes the metaphysical quandary in which he is ensnared in a soliloquy that takes place just before he speaks to the murderers recruited to terminate the line of Banquo: “To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus” (3.1.47). The statement is profoundly ironic, from the Christian perspective, because man *qua* creature is nothing, relative to his Creator. And, indeed, the safety of the creature lies in recognizing the supremacy (kingship) of the Creator; but, in seeking to murder Banquo, Macbeth is disregarding the supremacy of the Creator (in disregarding the commandment, “Thou shalt not kil” (Exodus 20:13, Geneva 33), and is therefore endangering his very existence (bringing retribution upon himself in this life, and eternal death, from the Christian viewpoint, in the next life), and all for a crown that is temporal and therefore ephemeral. The “lie” that Macbeth accepts is the “lie” of an apparent good. Shakespeare amplifies the atmosphere of sin, punishment, and loss, not by directly paralleling a

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<sup>167</sup> The proposition that no one acts for an evil end is axiomatic in Thomistic thought, and can be found stated in one form or another throughout the *Summa Theologica* as for instance in the article on “Whether Anyone Sins through Certain Malice” in Volume II, first part of the second part: “Evil Cannot be Intended by Anyone for its Own Sake” (ST, Pt. I-II, Q. 78 Art. 1, p. 941).

<sup>168</sup> The cause of moral evil is summed up concisely by Aquinas under his description of sin given in the article “Whether Self-Love is the Source of Every Sin?” in Volume II, first part of the second part: “the proper and direct cause of sin is to be considered on the part of the adherence to a mutable good; in which respect every sinful act proceeds from inordinate desire for some temporal good. Now the fact that anyone desires a temporal good inordinately, is due to the fact that he loves himself inordinately; for to wish anyone some good is to love him. Therefore, it is evident that inordinate love of self is the cause of every sin” (ST, Pt. I-II, Q. 77 Art. 4, p. 937).

biblical narrative, nor by clumsy allegory, but by deftly employing allusion to light a candle, as it were, in the dark wasteland of the tragic fall of Macbeth. By associating the biblical allusions in *Macbeth*, as identified by Shaheen, with the interpretive methodology of Beauregard and Barroll it becomes possible to perceive a yet more profound purpose in Shakespeare's art. Beyond motivation, beyond psychology, but still including such wellsprings of human behavior, lies the mysterious realm of the supernatural and its relationship to human experience, a reality that both Barroll and Beauregard touch on. As the premise of this chapter implies, Shakespeare is able to plumb the depths of religious thought without becoming overtly didactic, deftly avoiding the pitfalls of homiletics, not the least because he carefully applies biblical allusion to subtly suggest the greater lineaments of the cosmic biblical narrative as a means to understand human behavior, which, incidentally, happens also to be a means whereby to fascinate and entertain his audience. Using biblical allusion, then, to suggest greater depths allows Shakespeare to develop the personalities of his characters, and the general idiosyncratic action of his dramas without falling victim to the Scylla of allegory and the Charybdis of homily. It is the biblical allusion that illuminates with meaning Macbeth's inordinate desire for the apparent good of kingship. To ignore the allusions is to miss Shakespeare's greater purpose; for, with all due respect to Barroll and Beauregard, the end is greater than the means, and if aspiration, passion, virtue, or vice is the means by which Shakespeare's characters strive toward some good, in Macbeth's case an apparent good, then it is the concept of the good that determines the subordinate elements of the drama, that is the characters and their actions as the play builds to its conclusion. To put it another way, the *telos* of Shakespeare's drama, in this case *Macbeth*, is contained in the play's concept of the good, and, in turn, the concept of the good is contained as if in embryonic form in the biblical allusions dispersed throughout the play. This is so because the figure of Antichrist (which we have been here tracing) is the contrary of Christ in Scripture; and since that which is good is implied by its deprivation, as the form is implied by its shadow, or as love by hate, the allusions connote the substantial presence of the good in the person of Christ, true king. Macbeth, as *figura* of Antichrist, arises from a lower estate to usurp the throne of the anointed king Duncan, a *figura* of Christ. Macbeth terrorizes the land, as Revelation describes Antichrist will do to the entire earth, but he is destroyed by the return of the true king, in this case the progeny of Duncan, Malcolm, whose agent, MacDuff, like the biblical archangel Michael, dispatches him with the sword. In all things, Macbeth, in imitation of Antichrist, is the contrary



of true kingship which from the Christian perspective belongs paradigmatically to Christ. Because Antichrist (the personification of human evil) is a deceiver, Christ (the personification of the good) is the truth; because Antichrist is a usurper, Christ is legitimate king; because Antichrist is a murderer; Christ is the Savior. From the biblical perspective, the ultimate referent of substantial, or real, good is God; and the ultimate referent of evil, as a parasitic subordinate, is Satan. This concept is taken one step further in the New Testament where Jesus Christ represents God incarnate as man, and Antichrist represents Satan as man fully possessed (to a greater degree even than Judas) by the diabolic spirit.

Although Jorgensen concludes in *Our Naked Frailties* “that no Shakespearean play can be ‘solved’ by the search for a controlling idea” (217), a play as gripping as *Macbeth* is in its portrayal of human evil must be rooted in a vivid concept of what constitutes the good, else whence the horror? To put it another way, the devil and hell are sustained as objects of horror only in so much as they signify the loss of God and heaven. If fear is based on avoidance of something destructive or painful, it can only exist in our minds in as much as we know its contrary, for example, life, or pleasure. The horror of *Macbeth* lies in the loss of the protagonist’s true good, the salvation of his soul, and that is something Shakespeare’s Christian audience probably well understood. The horror also subsists in Shakespeare’s presentation of Macbeth as a *figura* of Antichrist because, from the Scriptural perspective, that final world tyrant is the prophesied instrument by which many souls will lose their eternal good. For Shakespeare’s early modern audience, Antichrist was already in the world in his forerunners,<sup>169</sup> or what this thesis has chosen to call *figuras*. Milward, in *Shakespeare’s Religious Background*, insists that Shakespeare adheres to a moral and theological perspective in conformity with medieval, orthodox Christian teachings:

When we calmly consider the way Shakespeare refers to various points of theology, we find that he refers to them far more extensively than is commonly realized. We also find that he observes an inner consistency both within his plays as a whole and with the theological tradition of Christianity—parallel to that which we have noticed in his moral viewpoint. This consistency is not necessarily the outcome of original thought or

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<sup>169</sup> 1 John 2:18: “Babes, it is the last time, and as ye have heard that Antichrist shal come, even now are there many Antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last time” (Geneva 112).

profound speculation. Rather, it may be seen as the expression of a deep personal faith, enriched by the theological inheritance of the Middle Ages, and stimulated by the continuing concern of medieval theologians and Renaissance thinkers for a synthesis between reason and revelation, between the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture. (246)

The intent of this chapter on *Macbeth* has not been to prove, one way or another, Shakespeare's religious predilections. Nevertheless, this chapter has necessarily touched on Shakespeare's evident concern for religious concepts, especially a marked concern with the biblical concept of evil as manifest in its human variant. It would, therefore, perhaps be rash to dismiss critics such as Milward who posit a viable rationale for Shakespeare's fascination with "the four last things—death, judgement, hell, and heaven" (246). To Milward's list, I would add, God, Satan, Christ and Antichrist as the persons presiding over those four last things.

By means of the many biblical allusions to Antichrist salted throughout the text, Shakespeare explores the spiritual destruction of one man, and the spoliation of one kingdom, while pointing to both the source and the end of all human evil, best summed up by Macduff at 4.3.55-56, in a "certain" biblical allusion identified by Shaheen: "Not in the legions/Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd" (636).<sup>170</sup> Shaheen refers the reader to Luke 8.30: "He said, Legion, because many devils were entered into him"; and Mark 5.9: "My name is Legion, for we are many" (636).<sup>171</sup> So it is that Shakespeare shows us how the intended temple of God has been transmogrified in the person of Macbeth into a *figura* of Antichrist, a habitation of devils. The noble, poetic warrior obsessed with the idol of kingship has consumed a deep draught of Satanic darkness in his endorsement of the witches' prophecies, a preternatural sacrament that has filled him with demons. In the end, Shakespeare's Macbeth is a man perfectly possessed, a diabolical king advertent to the biblical paradigm of human evil, Antichrist.

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<sup>170</sup> The Bishops' and the Rheims versions are substantially the same as the Geneva, vitiating any possibility of determining which variant Shakespeare may have had in mind.

<sup>171</sup> Again, all three versions of the Bible agree, therefore making it impossible to determine which variant Shakespeare had in mind.

## Chapter 4

### 4

### Thesis Conclusion

This thesis has argued that biblical allusions in *Richard III* and *Macbeth* refer to the figure of Antichrist, and that the portrayal of that figure is more consonant with the traditional, medieval paradigm, than with what would have been at the time a more modern Reformation portrait of Antichrist. Relevant scholarship on Shakespeare's two tyrant kings has affirmed associations with the devil, the Vice, the Machiavel, Faust, Saul, Herod, and even Judas; but the figure of Antichrist has been proposed rather less frequently, and the proofs have been arguably tenuous deriving from comparisons not rooted in the actual text itself. What I have tried to establish over the course of this thesis is that there is strong textual evidence for Shakespeare's development of a traditional Antichrist *figura* in both plays.

Having proposed three concrete signs of Antichrist, known to both the medieval and the early modern audience, that is to say, the triadic identity of first the king, who is both a usurper and a tyrant, second, the deceiver, and third the defiler of God's temple, this thesis has successfully affirmed, in both *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, the repeated presence of all three of these strong harbingers of Antichrist. As well, it has been proposed that certain consequential associations, such as witchcraft, when examined in the context of the central hypothesis, lend a substantial weight to the assertion that the shadow of Antichrist has indeed been cast over the tragic, and monstrous figures of Richard and Macbeth.

A brief but strenuous discussion of the Thomistic concepts of "apparent" and "true" good has opened a doorway of understanding into the underpinning psychology of Richard and Macbeth in relation to their inordinate desire to be king. As a corollary, I have been able to place the two tyrants squarely in the traditional Christian conception of evil, the ultimate human manifestation of which is Antichrist.

Delving into the meaning of deception in both *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, this thesis looked at Richard's aspiration to deceive others as to his moral state; and, as well, it looked at Macbeth's pivotal moment of self-deception in his encounter with the "instruments of darkness." The relationship between truth and deception was examined in the light of the Christian personification of truth as Jesus Christ, and its concomitant contrary in Antichrist. From there, I

used the term “the lie,” in contrast to Christ’s claim to be “the truth,” to refer to the personal attribute of Antichrist, that is, his identity as a deceiver. I was able to establish the assignation of deception as a central characteristic of both Richard and Macbeth predicated on their own words and, as well, on the biblical allusions Shakespeare wove throughout the text.

As I pressed on with proofs for the central hypothesis, it became apparent there existed a hermeneutic development between the three major signposts of Antichrist—the illicit desire for kingship that is rooted in the illegitimacy of usurpation is predicated on deception, of oneself in as much as it is a violation of conscience, or inner truth, and of others, in as much as it involves hypocrisy and dissimulation; and from the antagonism to truth arises the final sign of Antichrist, that is, self-exaltation (i.e., what Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica* calls “inordinate self-love,” the primary cause of sin)<sup>172</sup> in scorn of the Creator/creature relationship, a relationship which some would call reality, resulting in the Abomination of Desolation, the defiling of the Temple of God.

Associations that are not definitive signs of Antichrist, particularly the presence of witchcraft, substantiate, in the same sense that an accumulation of circumstantial evidence does in certain legal procedures, the key claim made in this thesis based upon the solid, objective tripartite evidence of Antichrist. Of particular interest, and amenable perhaps to further research, is the concurrence between the notion of the Abomination of Desolation (what I have called the defiling of the Temple of God) and witchcraft. It has been argued in these pages that witchcraft corresponds to apostasy—at least in its medieval definition—and apostasy is the prerequisite for the advent of Antichrist, the appearance of whom signifies the Abomination of Desolation. Although witchcraft, as it appears in *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, does not point directly to Antichrist, it does, through the medieval frame of reference, suggest his imminent coming, but perhaps more importantly for an understanding of Shakespeare’s plays, it suggest the immanence of Antichrist in the tyrants Richard and Macbeth.

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<sup>172</sup> For a fuller explication by Aquinas (ST, Pt. I-II, Q. 77 Art. 4, p. 937), see footnote 168 on page 95 of this thesis.

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