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MEDIAEVAL ACCOUNT OF ANTICHRIST

DOUGLAS HYDE

This unpublished story of Antichrist contained in the book of Lismore will be of interest to the student of Apocryphal Literature. It is probably largely founded upon Jewish tradition. Bousset in his book *Der Antichrist* has tried to show that the Jews had a fully-developed story or rather legend about Antichrist, which did not by any means coincide with the Christian conception of the monster who was to make his appearance in the latest age. The very material conception of him, as given in this Irish legend, reminds one of the mediaeval idea of the Devil as depicted by Albrecht Dürer. There is an allusion to our story in Atkinson's *Homilies from the Leabhar Breac* in the sermon on St. Michael, who, it is said, shall destroy Antichrist in the last days. Antichrist is there described as « a man who shall be born at the end of the world, his mother being his own sister ». It is also mentioned, as here, that Elias and Enoch will attack him, but they

shall be overcome by him. Then Michael shall slay him. There is an allusion to Michael and Antichrist in the *Félire of Oengus*, about 800, A. D., page cxxxix of Stokes' edition.

La gleo fria dric ndalach
 Diar Michel balc buadach
 Arslig' Ancrist nirach
 In mil slis-gei sluagach.

There is also a brief allusion to Antichrist and to Elias and Enoch in the life of St. Maignenn published by O'Grady in *Silva Gadelica*, vol. I, pp. 48-9.

Antichrist has no knees. It was a common belief that the Devil had no knees or that they were turned backwards. When the Devil asked St. Moling what he should do, and Moling suggests to make genuflection to God, the devil says, « I cannot bend forwards, for backwards are my knees » ; « siar atait mo ghluine » ¹.

In the Life of St. Maignenn, St. Mochuda is made to ask, « When does the 'Roth Rámhach' or Rowing Wheel come prognosticating the perverter in Ireland? This is how Antichrist comes, as one that is mighty and wise, yet foolish, foolish towards God, yet wise to work out his own detriment ². » Unfortunately the text breaks off about here, but the story seems to connect the mysterious Roth Rámhach with the wheels which, according to our text, served Antichrist for feet.

The mention of Elias and Enoch is due to the belief that they were taken up into Paradise in their human bodies, in order, later on, to meet Antichrist and fight him. When the souls of the patriarchs and prophets had been redeemed from the state in which they were, by Christ's death, and conducted into heaven, we are

1. *Calendar of Oengus*, under June 17.

2. O'Grady's *Silva Gadelica*, vol. I, p. 48; vol. II, p. 49.

told in the *Leabhar Breac* ' that they met « two tall and ancient men, rugged in aspect and rough withal », and they marvelled much to find two persons in their earthly bodies in Paradise before them, and enquired as to who they were; they were told that they were Elias and Enoch, and that God's providence had kept them to fight with Antichrist on his appearance « in the world's later age ».

As for Antichrist himself the general opinion seems to be that his name is derived from ἀντι « against », meaning an opposer of Christ, but it may also be taken to mean « one resembling Christ in appearance and power », as ἀντίθεος means « one who resembles a god » in Homer, and later ἀντιστρατήγος « a propraetor » ἀντεβασίλευς, « one who is king during an interregnum ». And this meaning seems to be in the mind of the author of this story when he says that Antichrist will raise people from the dead « in imitation of Christ ». I have not, discovered the original from which the following text was translated. It is probably lost.

SGEL AINNTE CRISD ANNSO.

Adubhairt an Tigherna gurub é in Diabal do thicfaid a curp daena... Antecrisd do ghēnad comartada móra isna poblaib ocus adéara gurub é atá isin Tarngaire coitcinn riamh, ocus ní lémhthar a rádh co tainic Crisd roime d'fhoiridhin an chine daenna. Ocus adubhairt Eoin Soiscelaidhe re h-Isa « A Tigherna crét in dealbh bhias ar in fer sin, co bhfácbhamais a thuaaras(g)bhál scribhtha innus co n-aitheontai hē as a mhignímháibh, ocus co nach creitti dó ar n-aithne ».

Adubhairt an Tigherna gurab ó meirdrig do treibh

Daineil Bheithil, ocus co n-oilfidhi isin Carbuban, ocus gu mbeth 'na chomhnuidhi isin cathair re n-abarthar Besasta, ocus beit .ui. cet feadh a fad a chuirp ocus da .xxet fedh an a leithet, ocus én-shúil as a édan ocus én-clár aigdhe aigi, ocus a bhél conuic a ucht, ocus ni bheit fiacla uachtaracha 'na chinn, ocus ni bheit ' glúine aigi, ocus beit buinn a chos comcruinn a mail roth cartach : ocus biaidh fínnsad dubh adhuathmar air 7 beit tri dethaighi teine as a sroin ocus as a bhél ag eirghi a n-aier mar lasracha teinntigi ocus ni tualang nech ar domhan a fholuch air. Ocus gach duine creidfis dó cuirfidh comhartha scribhtha 'na édan le h-iarunn nderg ocus ni fhédann nech ar bith in comurtha sin d'fholach cu lá na breithe. Ocus an lucht nach creidenn dó, marbaid iat uili, ocus bit siat ar na togha ag Dia. Ocus dúiscfidh se na mairbh ar aithris Crist, ocus na peathaig thuicter ann sin : ocus benuidh na croinn as a fhrémhaibh ocus cuirfidh a rémha¹ a n-áirdi, ocus do béra a torad tre na rémhaibh² tre cumhachtaibh an diabail. Ocus impöid na srotha anaghaidh áirdibh a n-aimsir an fhirsin. Muirbhfidh in mac in t-athair, ocus in t-athair in mac, ocus in brathair in brathair, ocus ni bhia creidium ná einech in tan sin ann. Ocus scrifaidh na hecalsa ocus teithfit na sacairt, ocus ni bhia cuimhne aca ar thaisibh na naomh thainic rompa ná ar na h-ecalsaibh a rabhtar na naeimh, ocus na mná bias ag umhaloit ann ni bhia náire acu ocus ni fholchait a náire ná a ndénocht. Ocus in lá gheinfid⁴ Ante-crisd biaidh duine marbh in gach éin tigh so ceatar hairdibh an domhuin, ocus na dhiaigh sin ticfait in da fháid atá a niugh a Pardus do chathughadh ris, .7. Hely ocus Enoc, ocus beit da xxet

1. MS. *beith*.

2. *fhrinha*.

3. *fhremhaibh*.

4. Geinfid with a stroke over the d in MS.

ocus *tri cet* la ag cathughadh re céle, ocus da eisi sin marbaidh sé iad araen isin Plati .7. a palas cathrach Iarusalem, ocus bit tri lá ocus gu medhon lai marbh, ocus ni léimha nech ar bith a n-adhlacad ac eglá Antecriosd. Ocus a medhon lai ainnsin eireochait 'na mbethaid a bhfiadhnuisi na n-uili, ocus adéra sé riu « A Ely ocus a Enoc, tigid isin mbethaid suthain festa », ocus rachait siat-san suas annsin, a fiadhnuisi na n-uili dhaine. Ocus ticfa talamh-cumhscugad ocus torann mhór teinntighi um na sluaghaibh in tan sin, ocus gach uili duini bias fare Antecriosd loiscfidher ocus murbhfidher iat tre cumhachta DÉ. Ocus da eisi sin cuirfidh Dia uilicmhachtach cum slánuighthe na ndaeine Michel arcaingel ocus a claideb nocht 'na láimh, ocus murbhfidh d' aein béim Antecriosd, or do-ni dhá rann de ó mhullach co talmáin. Ocus ni do scrís Antecriosd beir Michel in builli-si *acht* d' impód in domain a sdaid bhud *ferr*. Ocus is ann sin impodis in uili Padanach ocus Iudaidhe ocus Chinidhech ar in creidim Catolaca, ocus ni bhia *acht tri bliadhna* co leith iar sin gu lá in Bhrátha. 7 ca.

TRANSLATION

THE STORY OF ANTICHRIST, HERE

The Lord said that it is the Devil who will come in a human body, namely Antichrist to work great signs in the congregations, and he will say that it is he who has always been commonly prophesied about¹; and nobody will venture to say that Christ came before him to succour the human race.

1. *Lit.* « who is ever in the common prophesying ».

And John the Evangelist said to Jesus, « Lord, what shape shall be on that man so that we may leave a description of him written, so that he may be recognized from his misdeeds, and so that no one may believe on him, he being recognized ». The Lord said that it is from a harlot of the tribe of Daniel of Bethel (?) [he should be] and that he would be reared in the Caruban (sic) and that he would reside in the city which is called Besasta, and the length of his body shall be six hundred fathoms, and forty fathoms its breadth, and [he has] one eye protruding from ¹ his forehead, and his face all one flat surface ², and his mouth [reaching] down to his bosom, and there shall be no upper teeth in his head, and he shall have no knees, and the soles of his feet shall be round like the wheel of a cart, and there shall be horrible black hair on him, and there shall be three fiery fumes out of his nose and out of his mouth rising in the air, as it were flames of fire, and it is not possible for anyone in the world to hide from him. And everyone who shall believe on him, he shall put on his face a written mark with a red-hot iron, and nobody in the world is able to conceal that mark until the Day of Judgment. And those who do not believe on him, he slays them all, and they shall be chosen of God. And he shall awaken the dead in imitation of Christ, and the sinners are then made known (?) ³. And he will pluck the trees up by ⁴ their roots and he will set the roots overhead and they will give their fruit out through their roots, by the powers of the Devil. And the streams shall turn [and run] against the heights in the time of that man. The son shall

1. *Lit.* « out of ».

2. *Lit.* « board ».

3. *Lit.* « are understood there » or « then ».

4. *Lit.* « out of ».

slay the father and the father the son, and the brother the brother, and there shall not be either religion or generosity existing at that time. And he will destroy the churches, and the priests shall flee, and they shall not remember the relics of the saints who came before them, or the churches in which the saints had been. And the women who shall be making submission there, they shall have no shame, and they shall not conceal their shame nor their nakedness. And on the day on which Antichrist shall be born there shall be a person dead in every single house throughout the four quarters of the world. And after that the two prophets shall come who are today in Paradise, to fight with him, namely Elias and Enoch, and they shall be two score and three hundred days fighting with one another, and after that he shall slay them both in the Plati (sic), that is in a palace of the city of Jerusalem. And they shall be three days and up to the middle of the [next] day dead, and no one will venture to bury them for fear of Antichrist. And then in the middle of the day they shall rise to life in the presence of all, and He shall say to them, « O Elias and Enoch, come ye henceforth into eternal life ». And they shall go up then [to heaven] in the presence of all the people. And there shall come an earthquake and a great noise of [thunder and] lightning round the hosts at that time, and every person who shall be along with Antichrist he shall be burnt and slain, through the power of God. And after that Almighty God shall send Michael the Archangel to heal the people, with his sword drawn ¹ in his hand, and he shall slay Antichrist with one blow, for he shall make ² two parts of him from the top of him to the ground. And it is not to destroy

1. *Lit.* « bare ».

2. *Lit.* « makes ».

Antichrist that Michael strikes that blow, but to convert the world to a better state. And it is then that every Pagan and Jew and Gentile shall turn to the Catholic faith, and there shall be only three years and a half after that to the day of Judgment, etc.

