A century after Bousset’s monumental work *Der Antichrist* I defended my doctoral thesis on the earliest Christian views on eschatological opponents at the University of Leiden (April 1995). The present volume is a slightly revised version of that thesis.

Perhaps, at this place, a brief remark should be made on the reason for this book. My fascination with the subject grew out of wonder. Wonder why people came to such beliefs as the early Christians did. Who would expect a demonic creature coming from heaven to lead the believers astray? And: why would such an expectation grow? This amazement was combined with my impression that the earliest Christian expectations on eschatological opponents formed a much more varied spectrum than many students of the New Testament realise. Bousset’s idea that one Antichrist legend forms the background to the various early Christian passages on eschatological opponents is still a silent presupposition of many scholars. I hope that the present volume will contribute to a better understanding of the variety of these early Christian expectations as well as the way they are rooted in Jewish beliefs.

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