

Kingdoms and Beasts: The Early Prophecies of Hildegard of Bingen

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The twelfth-century Benedictine author Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) has long been famous for her first major work known as the *Scivias*, a description of her visions and her commentaries on them which she wrote between 1141 and 1151.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze a striking vision consisting of a group of animals which for Hildegard had prophetic meaning. Her commentary on this vision forms the core of her early prophetic thought.

In contrast to other contemporary writers, who developed their eschatology in the form of Biblical exegesis, Hildegard was a visionary whose prophecies took the form of commentaries on the visions which she believed had been sent to her by the Holy Spirit.¹ She maintained that from her infancy she had been instructed by the Holy Spirit in the form of visions and voices which were not transmitted to her through her physical senses and imagination. Instead, Hildegard claimed that a heavenly light illuminated her soul where she experienced the visions and instructions sent by the Holy Spirit. She also stated that in the course of these visionary experiences she was awake and conscious of the world around her. Hildegard believed that she had the God-given duty of revealing these divine revelations in her writings. Because Hildegard incorporated her visions into her eschatology the symbolism found in her prophetic thought was highly original.² As Newman has pointed out:

... her particular mode of seeing, with its visions within visions
... remains *sui generis*. To her contemporaries the gift
appeared 'strange' and 'unheard-of,' and we must finally
concur.³

With regard to the physical causes of Hildegard's visions, Flanagan believed that they were the product of migraine attacks,⁴ but this is impossible to prove.

Before Hildegard's prophecies can be evaluated, a brief discussion of the relevant historical background and key concepts is in order.

¹ H. Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist in Mittelalter* (Munster: Verlag Aschendorf, 1973), 478-479.

² *Ibid.*, 478-526.

³ B. Newman, "Hildegard of Bingen: Visions and Validation" *Church History* 54 (1985):168-169.

⁴ S. Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen, 1098-1179: A Visionary Life* (London: Routledge, 1989; London: Routledge, 1990), 193-213.

From the Early Middle Ages until the twelfth century, the views of St. Augustine of Hippo (d.430) dominated eschatology in the Latin West.⁵ Augustine saw the sixth age of the world (that is, the time between the first advent of Christ and the end of the world) as the *status praesens*. Augustine and the Latin writers who followed him perceived the *status praesens* as a single, undivided unit of time in which neither significant material nor spiritual improvement (after Christ and the apostles) was considered possible nor, in fact, any historical development at all.

Augustine also correlated the sixth age of the world with the old age (*senectus*) of man. Thus, the sixth age witnessed a continuation of the temporal decline of man and the world which had already begun in the fifth age.⁶ Augustine refused to predict when exactly the sixth age would end.⁷ The end of the world would remain unknown to mankind.⁸

In the course of the twelfth century, Western writers began to abandon the Augustinian view of the sixth age. For example, according to Kamlah,⁹ one of the most important twelfth-century innovations with regard to the periodization of time was the development of the concept of *Kirchengeschichte*. This concept involved the division of the sixth age of the world into several periods which were assigned concrete historical details. The use of *Kirchengeschichte* represented a complete shift away from the traditional, Augustinian view of the time between the apostolic Church and the Last Judgement as the *status praesens* as an undifferentiated block of time in which historical change was not acknowledged.

Kamlah traced the first use of the concept of *Kirchengeschichte* to Anselm of Havelberg's *Liber de unitate fidei*, an exegesis of the *Apocalypse* which was written around 1150. In it, Anselm divided Augustine's sixth age of the world into seven *status* and he added concrete historical details to each *status*.¹⁰

Anselm correlated the seven *status* of the Church with the opening of the seven seals. He originated the use of *Kirchengeschichte* in his attempt to explain how the Church could change with time. More specifically, in opposition to the medieval bias that new developments were by nature bad, he wished to defend the appearance of a new institution within the Church, namely, the rise of the regular canons, of whom he, as a Premonstratensian, was a member. Anselm found his answer to the question of how the

⁵ W. Kamlah, "Apocalypse und Geschichtstheologie," *Historische Studien* 285 (1935): 9-12, 61ff.

⁶ A. Luneau, *L'histoire du salut* (Paris: Beauchesne et ses fils, 1964), 315-318. Augustine correlated the ages of the world and the ages of man (both as an individual and humanity in general) as follows: 1) Adam to Noah – *infantia*, 2) Noah to Abraham – *pueritia*, 3) Abraham to King David – *adolescentia*, 4) David to the Babylonian Captivity – *iuventus*, 5) the Babylonian Captivity to Christ – *gravitas*, which was a decline from youth to old age, 6) Christ to the end of the world – *senectus*. See Luneau, *Salut*, 284ff; R. Schmidt, "Aetates mundi: Die Weltalter als Gliederungsprinzip der Geschichte," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 67 (1955-56): 291-294; P. Archambault, "The Ages of Man and the Ages of the World," *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 12 (1966): 203-211.

⁷ Luneau, *Salut*, 316; R. Schmidt, "Aetates mundi," 294.

⁸ Schmidt, "Aetates mundi," 294; T. Mommsen, "St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 (1951):350-354.

⁹ Kamlah, "Apocalypse," 61ff.

¹⁰ Anselm of Havelberg, *Liber de unitate fidei*, *Patrologiae, Series Latina* 188, 1149C-1160A. Edyvean has accepted Kamlah's thesis that Anselm's exegesis of the seven seals was highly original in its use of concrete details. See W. Edyvean, *Anselm of Havelberg and the Theology of History* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency 1972), 26.

Church could change in Tyconius' notion that as the devil changed his attacks against the Church, the Church must change suitably in order to defend itself against these attacks.¹¹

Another example of an author who employed the principle of *Kirchengeschichte* was Gerhoh of Reichersberg. Gerhoh's periodization of the sixth age of the world as well as the historical details which he assigned to these periods reflected the fact that Gerhoh was an extreme partisan of the Gregorian program of Church reform. In fact, he belonged to an order of regular canons, the Augustinians, one of the new orders which was actively engaged in ecclesiastical reforms.¹²

Gerhoh's desire for ecclesiastical reform and his recognition of the historical importance of the Investiture Controversy was apparent in the third and fourth divisions of his four-fold scheme for periodizing the history of the sixth age of the world: 1) the period of the martyrs, 2) the period of the heretics, 3) the time of Pope Gregory I (590-604) to Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085), and the present, from *ca.* 1100 or the reign of the Emperor Henry IV (1056-1106) to the end of the world.¹³

The evolution of Hildegard's prophecies and concept of the sixth age of the world can be most clearly traced through her exegesis of a complex group of symbols which first appeared in a vision recorded in the *Scivias*.¹⁴ Hildegard stated the basic theme behind this group of symbols in the introduction to this vision.¹⁵ Echoing the Augustinian theme of the *senectus mundi*, she maintained that the world was heading toward its end on a path full of disasters. The church would also experience a great share of troubles from the Antichrist and his harbringers. However, the Church would not only survive these ordeals but would emerge from them greater than ever.

In the first part of her vision, Hildegard described five beasts which she saw in the north.¹⁶ These animals signified "five very fierce courses of temporal kingdoms,"¹⁷ as well as the times during which these kingdoms would exist. The fact that these future kingdoms were symbolized by animals located in the direction of the north indicated that these kingdoms would be tainted by sinful, carnal desires.¹⁸ The animals symbolized the

¹¹ Edyvean, *Anselm*, 24-25; Kamlah, "Apocalypse," 64-60.

¹² B. Topfer, *Das kommende Reich des Friedens* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1964), 28; H. Rauh, *Antichrist*, 416-418.

¹³ For Gerhoh's view of the sixth age, see A. Dempf, *Sacrum Imperium* (Munich and Berlin, 1929; repr. Ed., Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1954), 252-261; Topfer, *Reich des Friedens*, 28-33; Rauh, *Antichrist*, 416-473; M. Reeves, "The Originality and Influence of Joachim of Fiore," *Traditio* 36 (1980): 280-281; B. McGinn, *Visions of the End* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 96-107.

¹⁴ A. Fuhrkotter, ed., *Hildegardis Scivias*, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, Vol 43 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1978), III, 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 11, 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 11, 1-6.

¹⁷ ...quinque ferocissimi cursus temporalium regnorum... *Ibid.*, III, 11, 1, 155-156.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 11, 1, 153-157. Elsewhere, Hildegard maintained that the kingdoms of the world were supported by a vice which she labeled Love of the World. The virtue which opposed this was Love of Heaven. See her *Liber vitae meritum* in J. Pitra, ed., *Analecta Sacra*, vol. 8 (Monte Cassino, 1882; reprint ed., Farnborough, England: Gregg Press Ltd., 1966), 10.

For Hildegard, the dynamic force behind history was the battle between God and his virtues versus Satan and his vices for man's soul. See *Scivias*, III, 4, 6. Although the virtues appeared to her as personified forms in her visions, she carefully pointed out that they were not animate:

...non quod ulla virtus sit vivens forma in semetipsa, sed solummodo praelucida sphaera a Deo fulgens in opera hominis; quia homo perficitur cum virtutibus, quoniam ipsae sunt opus operantis hominis in Deo.

ferocity of these future kingdoms. The first animal was a “fiery dog” which did not burn.¹⁹ Thus, “snapping” men would live during the times symbolized by this animal. These men would believe that they appear like fire. However, they would not actually burn in divine justice.²⁰

The second beast was a yellow lion.²¹ The lion symbolized future times which would be characterized by warlike men who would not observe God’s righteousness in their wars. The yellow color of the lion indicated that the kingdoms of these warlike times would begin to grow weak.²²

The next animal was the pale horse associated with the fourth seal of the Apocalypse (Rev. 6:7-8).²³ The men who would live during the times symbolized by the horse would neglect the virtues in their haste to pursue pleasure. They would be completely sunk in sin and lust.²⁴ Their preoccupation with sin and neglect of the virtues would soon rob their kingdoms of strength. The paleness of the horse signified the fall of their kingdoms.

The fourth animal was a black pig.²⁵ The leaders who would exist in the times symbolized by the pig would engulf themselves in filth by which Hildegard meant that they would violate God’s precept by committing fornication and related sins.²⁶ The blackness of the pig symbolized the gloominess or sadness of these leaders. Hildegard

See *Scivias*, III, 3, 3, 166-169.

The purpose of the virtues was to ensure man’s wellbeing by showing him the way to the good and by helping him in the struggle against Satan. They also indicated to God whether or not man was worshipping him. See *Scivias* I, 6, 4, 112-139 and *Explanatio symboli S. Athanasii*, PL 197, 1067C. Thus, Hildegard was able to employ the relative strength or weakness of the virtues among men of different historical periods or of future ages as a barometer with which she measured humanity’s spiritual progress or decline.

¹⁹ ...canis igneus, sed non ardens; quia cursus temporum illorum homines suae constitutionis mordaces habebit, in sua quidem aestimatione velut ignis apparentes, sed in iustitia Dei non ardent. *Scivias* III, 11, 2.

²⁰ In the LVM (pp. 11 and 35), Hildegard used a dog as a symbol of petulance (*petulantia*). According to her, men who were petulant were like a hunting dog because they did not have steadfast minds. Their minds were like a hunting dog because they followed the will of other people just as a hunting dog followed its prey. She also noted (LVM 44-45) that people who were guilty of *petulantia* would be punished by fire.

²¹ ...leo fulvis coloris est: quoniam cursus ille bellicosos homines sustinebit, multa quidem bella moventes sed in eis rectitudinem Dei non inspicientes: quia in fulvo colore regna illa incipient fatigationem debilitatis incurrere. *Scivias*, III, 11, 3.

²² Hildegard also used a lion in the conventional manner to symbolize Christ, who was the enemy of Satan. See LVM, 9, 30, 88.

²³ ...equus pallidus: quia tempora illa homines in diluvio peccati lascivos et in velocitate voluptatis suae operationem bonarum virtutum transilientes producant, ubi tunc cor regnorum illorum in pallore reinae suae confingetur quoniam ruborem fortitudinis suae iam perdet. *Scivias*, III, 11, 4.

²⁴ Cf. interpretations of the pale horse by Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, PL 93, 147C; Haimo of Halberstadt, *In Apocalypsin*, PL, 117, 1027D-1082D; Anselm of Havelberg, *De unitate fidei*, PL, 188, 1152C-1154C; Martin of Leon, *Expositio libri apocalypsis*, PL 209, 336D-337B.

²⁵ ...niger porcus: quoniam cursus ille rectores magnam nigredinem tristitia in semetipsis facientes habet et se luto immunditiae involventes, videlicet divinam legem in multis contrarietatibus, fornicationum et aliorum similium malorum postponentes, ac multa schismata divinorum praeceptorum in sanctitate machinantes. *Scivias*, III, 11, 5.

²⁶ Elsewhere (Ibid., III, 7, 6) Hildegard denounced pagans who refused to convert as being covered with fornication and adultery like a pig covered with mud.

was referring to the leaders of kingdoms because all of the animals symbolized kingdoms.²⁷

The fifth animal was a grey wolf.²⁸ The earlier times signified by the wolf would be characterized by men who would struggle for control over kingdoms with the result that the kingdoms of these times would be divided and fall. The wolf indicated the rapaciousness of these future men. The gray color of the wolf symbolized the cunning or deceit these men would employ to obtain power because they would try not to appear black or white, that is, they would not wish to reveal their true selves. When the kingdoms of the earlier times symbolized by the wolf have fallen, the Antichrist would appear and persecute the elect.²⁹

In the next scene of her vision, the five animals turned towards the west.³⁰ This scene signified that the “fallen times” (*caduca tempora*) symbolized by the animals “fell” with the setting sun.³¹ Hildegard based the comparison between the times and the sun on an analogy with man: “... since just as it rises and sets so also do men when one is born and another dies.”³² Hildegard thus compared the history of the world to the course of a day. The Incarnation had taken place relatively late in the day because Christ arrived after the world had already passed through five ages. She likened Christ’s arrival to the time of the day after the ninth hour, when evening was approaching. Thus, she maintained, in true Augustinian fashion, that the day which symbolized the history of the world was already moving towards its sunset at the time of the Incarnation. The advent of the Antichrist would be like the setting of the sun in the west, in other words, near the end of the world.

Next, Hildegard observed that a hill with five tops appeared in the west before the five animals.³³ The five hilltops in the west indicated the power of the carnal desires

²⁷ In the LVM (147), the vice of injustice was symbolized by an animal with a body like a pig’s.

²⁸ ...lupus griseus quia illa tempora habebunt homines multas rapinas tam in potestatibus quam in reliquis successibus sibimetipsis inferentes, cum in his certaminibus nec nigros nec albos sed velut griseos in verustis suis se ostendentes, capita rengorum illorum ea dividentes deiciunt: quoniam tunc veniet tempus irretitionis multarum animarum, ubi error errorum ab infer usque ad caelum erigitur, ita quod ‘filii lucis’ torculari martyriorum suorum imponuntur, Filium Dei non negantes sed filium perditionis abicientes, qui diabolicis artibus voluntates suas perficere tentabit. *Scivias*, III, 11, 6, 182-192.

²⁹ Medieval writers saw the wolf as a symbol of the Antichrist because this animal was the enemy of the lamb, which symbolized Christ. See R. Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 76.

In the LVM (198), Hildegard used a creature with the head of a wolf to signify the vice of sorcery. She reasoned that to acquire the diabolical arts of magic, people had to surrender their souls to Satan who would consume his victims the way a wolf consumed a lamb. This creature also had a lion’s tail, which symbolized that sorcerers come to a bad end. The fact that the remainder of this creature’s body resembled a dog indicated that sorcerers employed their knowledge of magic to hunt for evil. Hildegard, emphasized the Antichrist’s role as a sorcerer in her account of his life.

³⁰ *Scivias*, III, 11, 6, 193-196.

³¹ *Ibid.*, III, 11, 24-25.

³² ...quia sicut [sol] oritur et occidit, ita etiam faciunt homines, cum hic nascitur et cum ille moritur. *Scivias*, III, 11, 6, 194-196. Origen (d. ca. 253) had formulated a pattern based on a correlation between the twelve-hour solar day mentioned in the parable about the workers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16) and the history of the world. Thus, the morning or first hour represented the time from Adam to Noah, the third hour, Noah to Abraham, the sixth hour, Abraham to Moses, the ninth hour, Moses to Christ, and the eleventh hour, Christ to the end of the world. Origen had also correlated the hours of the solar day with the ages of man. See Schmidt, “*Aetates Mundi*” 302-306.

³³ *Ibid.*, III, 11, 7, 199-202.

associated with the five future times and kingdoms, which were symbolized by the five animals.

A rope ran from each animal's mouth to each hilltop.³⁴ The ropes coming from the animals' mouths indicated that from the beginning of the times symbolized by these animals the power of carnal desires would maintain an "uninterrupted course of great extent" (*tenor prolixitatis*).³⁵ The ropes which were connected with the first four beasts were black, which signified that the courses of the carnal desires of the times symbolized by the animals would be characterized by the rapacity of the men living then and that the great lengths of these carnal desires would be characterized by man's stubborn pursuit of pleasure.³⁶ The rope coming from the mouth of the wolf was partly black and partly white.³⁷ The blackness of this rope symbolized the iniquities which would be committed under the Antichrist while the whiteness of this rope signified the justice of those who would oppose him.³⁸

Dividing time or viewing historical development in terms of kingdoms symbolized by animals can be traced back at least as far as Jerome whose concept of four successive world empires became important in the Middle Ages.³⁹ Jerome developed this concept in a commentary on the four beasts mentioned in Daniel 7:2-8.⁴⁰ The lioness symbolized the kingdom of the Babylonians and their way of life which was characterized by brutality, cruelty, luxuriousness and lust.⁴¹ Moreover, the eagle's wings attached to the lioness stood for the pride of Babylon. The second beast was like a bear whose ferocity

³⁴ Ibid., III, 11, 7, 203-206.

³⁵ Ibid., III, 11, 7, 205.

³⁶ Ibid., III, 11, 7, 206-211. In a fragment from her medical works, Hildegard noted that the letter "c" or the number one hundred was written on each rope of the beasts. See H. Schipperges "Ein unveröffentlichtes Hildegard-Fragment," *Sudhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaft* 40 (1956): 73. In the *Scivias* (III, 2, 19), she used the number one hundred to signify man's moral imperfection from the time of Christ to the end of the world. On the last day, the elect will achieve moral perfection, which she symbolized by the number one thousand.

³⁷ *Scivias*, III, 11, 7, 207-215.

³⁸ This scene of the five animals and the hill was portrayed in a miniature in Hs 1 (214 verso). Besides having the best text of the *Scivias* (a distinction it with Pal. Lat. 311), Hs 1 contains illuminations which are generally in harmony with the text. The only inaccuracies in the illumination of this scene is that the lion is painted red instead of yellow. The hill is somewhat distorted because it is very elongated like a tree with five thick trunks at its top.

In addition to having a text which contains many errors, the illuminations found in the Codex Salem X, 16, do not do justice to the details described in the text. The illumination (177 recto) of the scene in question consists of very simplified pictorial versions of Hildegard's descriptions. The illumination does not help to explain the text. In fact, the artist had to use captions so that the reader could identify the pictures. For example, the animals are labeled: canis, leo, equus, porcus, and lupus. Only the horse and the pig can be recognized without their captions. The horse is colored light blue with patches of white. The four other animals are light brown or beige. Thus, their colors do not match the descriptions in the text. The ropes of the dog, lion, and pig are uncolored, while the ropes of the horse and the wolf are black and white. Thus only the rope of the wolf is true to the text. The caption for this picture reads: "Collis quinque apices habens, et ab ore cuiusque bestiae funis ad quemque apicem collis eiusdem extensus." This is close to the text. The hilltops are light brown just like the animals.

³⁹ Rauh, *Antichrist*, 530-531.

⁴⁰ Jerome of Stridon, *In Danielelem*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, Vol. 75 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1964), II, vii, 2-8.

⁴¹ Jerome mistook "lion" for "lioness" when he was translating from the Aramaic or the Greek. See his *Commentary on Daniel*, trans. G. Archer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 72.

symbolized that the Persians, who succeeded the Babylonians, had a rigorous and frugal life style. Jerome thought that the third beast or the leopard symbolized the Macedonians. He based this correlation on the fact that a leopard was noteworthy for its speed. Likewise, Alexander the Great conquered the world very quickly. The Macedonians also resembled a leopard because they were bloodthirsty and tended to plunge into death. The fourth beast, which was strong and terrible, signified the Roman Empire. The fact that this beast devoured and crushed everything indicated that Rome would destroy and subjugate all nations. Jerome maintained that Rome would be the last empire. The fall of the Roman Empire would lead to the rise of the kingdom of the Antichrist.⁴²

With regard to the derivation of Hildegard's symbolism, the pale horse and the wolf, as it has been noted, were conventional symbols. The concept of using a lion to symbolize a kingdom was as old as the book of Daniel and Jerome. However, Hildegard modified this symbol in her own way. Unlike the lion in Daniel, her lion was not winged. Furthermore, there was no mention of a color in connection with the lion in Daniel, whereas Hildegard described the lion in her vision as yellow. The symbols of the dog and the pig seem to be original.

Liebeschütz's notion of the derivation of these symbols was inadequate and not backed by sufficient evidence. He noted that Hildegard's *Physica*, which was her encyclopedia of pharmacology, contained descriptions of similar animals.⁴³ From this similarity, he concluded that these animal symbols were derived from "einer zoologischen Überlieferung." However, in the *Physica*, Hildegard dealt with these animals in a way quite different from the *Scivias*. In the *Physica*, she described the nature of the dog or the lion in general and whether or not the species or animal under discussion was good or bad for man. She evaluated the medical properties of these species. In the *Physica*, unlike the *Scivias*, she did not assign any eschatological meaning to these animals.

When the entire scene of the five beasts anchored to the hilltops is considered, the originality of Hildegard's symbolism is readily apparent. She placed traditional symbols like the lion, horse, and wolf in an original context. The originality of this scene was an outgrowth of her visionary experience, which set her apart from contemporary exegetes such as Gerhoh of Reichersberg, Anselm of Havelberg, and Honorius of Autun. Hildegard was more like an Old Testament prophet in the tradition of Isaiah or Jeremiah in that she criticized the moral lapses of leaders like Archbishop Henry of Mainz and revealed personal visions, which she believed were divinely-inspired, concerning the present and future. The concept of comparing Hildegard to the Old Testament prophets can be traced as far back as her *Vita*, which likened her to Ezechiel and Daniel.⁴⁴

Hildegard's use of five beasts to symbolize periods of time and the kingdoms which would exist in these periods was unusual. She did not follow the traditional pattern of four beasts and empires which had been established by Jerome, nor did she

⁴² Jerome of Stridon, *In Danielelem*, II, vii, 7c, 8.

⁴³ H. Liebeschütz, *Das allegorische Weltbild der heiligen Hildegard von Bingen* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1930; reprint ed., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), 153-154. See also *Physica*, PL 197, VII, 3, 8, 17, 19, 20.

⁴⁴ M. Klaes, ed., *Vita Sanctae Hildegardis*, CCCM, vol 126 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1993), I, IX, 3-4 and III, XVI, 32-33.

follow the patterns of seven found in the *Apocalypse* such as the seven seals or the seven-headed dragon. Liebeschütz, in his interpretation of the five beasts, came to the conclusion that Hildegard chose five because five ages of the world proceeded Christ.⁴⁵ Hildegard's account of the five beasts and the symbols which were associated with them does not contain the slightest implication that she recognized any relationship between the ages of the world which passed before Christ and the times designated by the five beasts.⁴⁶

Rauh, on the other hand, has suggested that Hildegard's use of five in connection with her account of the kingdoms which were symbolized by the beasts might be derived from the five fallen kings mentioned in Revelation 17:10.⁴⁷ Rauh's thesis is very probably correct because one of the main themes in her discussion of the five beasts was the downfall of the kingdoms which they signified.

Scholarly opinion has been divided over the question of the meanings of the five beasts. There is the problem of whether or not they signified periods of time. Liebeschütz and Rauh denied that the beasts represented periods of time. Liebeschütz felt that in the *Scivias*, Hildegard was using the five beasts to signify the evil of secular authority in general and not in future periods of time.⁴⁸ Rauh maintained that the animals referred to future things but not to periods of time.⁴⁹ One major problem with Rauh's treatment of the five beasts was that he did not clearly distinguish Hildegard's early use of the beasts in the *Scivias*, from her later use of these symbols in the *Liber divinorum operum*. Warnefried and Hocht were of the opinion that the beasts designated periods of time.⁵⁰ They did not specify whether or not Hildegard considered these periods of time to be in the future. Dempf, Widmer, Rosenberg, and Gronau upheld the notion that for Hildegard the five beasts represented five future periods of time.⁵¹

The position maintained by the author of this article is that from Hildegard's point of view, the five beasts in the *Scivias* represented five future periods of time. Nevertheless, it should be noted that these periods of time were vaguely-defined compared with Hildegard's later discussion of these animals in the *Liber divinorum operum*. The main reason why these animals should be interpreted as referring to the future was that Hildegard employed the future tense in connection with the events which were associated with the time signified by the dog.⁵² Thus, the sequence of events which followed the time signified by the dog will occur in the future as well. Furthermore, Hildegard also used the future tense in connection with events which were designated by

⁴⁵ Liebeschütz, *Weltbild*, 153-154.

⁴⁶ *Scivias*, III, 11.

⁴⁷ Rauh, *Antichrist*, 507-508.

⁴⁸ Liebeschütz, *Weltbild*, 154.

⁴⁹ Rauh, *Antichrist*, 510.

⁵⁰ C. Warnefried, *Merkwürdige Gesichte, Prophezeiungen, und gottliche Offenbarungen über Kirche und Staat* (Regensburg: Georg Joseph Manz, 1871), 163; J. Hocht, *Hildegard von Bingen, Gesichte über das Ende der Zeiten* (Wiesbaden: Credo-Verlag, 1953), 22.

⁵¹ Dempf, *Sacrum Imperium*, 267; B. Widmer, *Heilsordnung und Zeitgeschehen in der Mystik Hildegards von Bingen* (Basel: Verlag von Hilbing und Lichtenhahn, 1955), 185, 193-195; A. Rosenberg, *Sibyl und Prophetin* (Munich: Otto Wilhelm Barth-Verlag, 1960), 85; E. Gronau, *Hildegard von Bingen, 1098-1179: Prophetische Lehrerin der Kirche an der Schwelle und am Ende der Neuzeit*, with a forward by F. Holbock, 2nd ed. (Stein am Rhein: Christiana-Verlag, 1991), 143.

⁵² *Scivias*, III, 11, 2.

the lion, horse, and wolf.⁵³ Contrary to Rauh's opinion, Hildegard's employment of such phrases as *cursus temporum illorum* and *illa tempora* indicates that the animals signified periods of time and not just things.⁵⁴

Another question regarding the beasts is their political significance. The notion of Liebeschutz that the beasts signified the evil of secular authority in general and not in future periods of time has already been disproved. Hildegard was referring only to evil secular powers which would exist in the future. Rauh maintained that when Hildegard employed the term "kingdoms" (*regna*) in connection with the five beasts, she did not mean a specific kind of political structure but the evil political or social behavior which would pave the way for the advent of the Antichrist.⁵⁵ Similarly, Gronau believed that Hildegard used the five beasts to represent the spiritual characteristics of the future rather than the kingdoms of the future.⁵⁶

However, Hildegard meant kingdoms in a literal sense. For example, she spoke of leaders (*rectores*) in association with the period symbolized by the pig.⁵⁷ The use of such a term makes more sense in relation to kingdoms than it does to evil political conduct in general. Furthermore, in her later thought, Hildegard was quite specific in describing how kingdoms will dominate Europe's future political scene.⁵⁸ Warnefried and Dempf held that the five beasts signified temporal kingdoms.⁵⁹ Lubac felt that each beast represented a definite kingdom.⁶⁰ But Hildegard consistently used the plural whenever she referred to the kingdoms (*regna*) and those who will lead those kingdoms (*rectores*).⁶¹ She most likely intended each beast to signify all of the kingdoms which will exist in a particular future period of time.

In conclusion, the five beasts represented five vaguely-defined periods of time, from Hildegard's point of view. According to her, the evil people who will live in these kingdoms will prepare the way for the arrival of the Antichrist.

Except for one innovative element, her discussion of the time symbolized by the beasts was traditional or Augustinian. The Augustinian components included the theme that the world was in its old age and also the notion that man could not calculate the time of the arrival of the Antichrist. In accordance with the Augustinian view of the sixth age as the *status praesens*, Hildegard's accounts of the periods and kingdoms symbolized by the first four beasts were just vague variations on the traditional theme of moral decline which would pave the way for the arrival of the Antichrist. The concept that sin and evil would thrive near the advent of the Antichrist or the end of the world was a traditional concept in eschatology. This view was based on Matthew 24:12.⁶² In harmony with the nonhistorical notion of the sixth age as the *status praesens*, Hildegard did not foretell any historical developments or changes in the future times and kingdoms which would come

⁵³ Ibid., III, 11, 3-4; III, 11, 6, 182-192.

⁵⁴ Ibid., III, 11, 2; III, 11, 4; III, 11, 6, 182-192.

⁵⁵ Rauh, *Antichrist*, 509-510.

⁵⁶ Gronau, *Hildegard*, 130-143.

⁵⁷ Scivias, III, 11, 5.

⁵⁸ *Liber divinorum operum*, PL 197, 1026B-D.

⁵⁹ Warnefried, *Prohezeiungen*, 163; Dempf, *Sacrum Imperium*, 267.

⁶⁰ H. de Lubac, *Exegese medievale* (Paris, Aubier, 1961) Pt. 2, Vol. 1, 525-526.

⁶¹ Scivias, III, 11, 2-5.

⁶² Emmerson, *Antichrist*, 42, 52-53.

before the advent of the Antichrist.⁶³ Also in agreement with the Augustinian concept of the sixth age, Hildegard's use of the five beasts demonstrated that her early prophetic thought did not foresee any material or spiritual improvement in the time before the Antichrist.

Hildegard's description of the five beasts made one major departure from the traditional view of the sixth age as the *status praesens* by dividing the future of the sixth age into five vaguely-defined periods of time. She thereby drew away from the notion of the sixth age as a single unit of time. By periodizing the sixth age, Hildegard adopted one of the characteristics of *Kirchengeschichte*. However, the *Scivias* did not incorporate the other aspect of *Kirchengeschichte*, namely the use of concrete historical details in conjunction with periods of time. Therefore, Hildegard's treatment of the five beasts in the *Scivias* marked an incomplete transition from the Augustinian view of the sixth age as the *status praesens* and the new way of dealing with the sixth age in terms of *Kirchengeschichte*.

Scholarship has overlooked the significance of Hildegard's periodization of time in connection with the five beast in the *Scivias*. This important departure from the Augustinian view of the sixth age has gone unnoticed with the result that the *Scivias* has been stereotyped as traditional or Augustinian. For example, Liebeschutz⁶⁴ correctly observed that the use of the beasts in the *Scivias* was indicative of patristic eschatology because Hildegard focused her attention on the Antichrist and not on the future events which would precede him. However, he completely failed to understand her periodization of time and its significance. Lubac⁶⁵ felt that the *Scivias*, like all medieval eschatological works which were written before Joachim of Fiore, was in the Augustinian tradition. Likewise, McGinn⁶⁶ claimed that "...the *Scivias*...shows this Benedictine abbess as conservative and monastic in outlook..." Granted that she dealt with the great majority of topics in the *Scivias* in a traditional or Augustinian manner, yet the periodization of time which she described in connection with the five beasts represented a significant departure from the Augustinian view of the sixth age.⁶⁷

⁶³ Mommsen, in his account of Augustine's view of the sixth age of the world, described Augustine's attitude towards kingdoms during this age in words which could be applied precisely to Hildegard's attitude towards the kingdoms signified by the five beasts. Mommsen stated that in Augustine's view, the sixth age was characterized by "...the mutability and instability of human affairs. Cities, kingdoms, and empires have risen and fallen throughout the course of history and this will always be the case." T. Mommsen, "Progress," 373. This Augustinian indifference to the historical fate of temporal political institutions was clearly manifested in Hildegard's account of the kingdoms which were symbolized by the five beasts in the *Scivias*.

⁶⁴ Liebeschutz, *Weltbild*, 154.

⁶⁵ Lubac, *Exegese medievale*, Pt. 2, Vol. 1, 459-527.

⁶⁶ McGinn, *Visions*, 97.

⁶⁷ The thesis that the periodization of time employed in association with the five beasts in the *Scivias* signaled an important departure from the Augustinian view of the sixth age as the *status praesens* or an incomplete transition to *Kirchengeschichte* was original to the author's dissertation "The Prophecies of Hildegard of Bingen," (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1983), ch. 2.