

Maronite Monks of Adoration

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The Antichrist

“Prepare yourself, O man!” said St. Cyril of Jerusalem. “You hear the signs of Antichrist: do not remind yourself only of them, but communicate them liberally to all around you. If you have children, delay not to instruct them. If you are a teacher, prepare your spiritual children, lest they take the false for the true. ‘For the mystery of iniquity does already work.’ God forbid that it should be fulfilled in our days. However, let us be prepared.”

About the Antichrist, let us raise two fundamental questions: who is he, and what will he do?

I. Who is the Antichrist?



The apostle John wrote, “As you have heard that the Antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists.” (1 Jn 2: 18) So it might seem that the Antichrist is not one person, but that the term refers to many, or to a general spirit

or attitude. But St. Paul speaks clearly of one man: “That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who is the adversary and rival of all that is called God or worshipped...” (2 Thess 2:3)

The solution is that, though there will be one man who is the Antichrist, there are many types or foreshadowings of the Antichrist. These historical forerunners of the Antichrist will resemble the Antichrist in lesser ways and so they are called antichrists in a secondary sense. Cardinal Newman wrote, “Just as the types of Christ went before Christ, so the shadows of Antichrist precede him. In truth, every event of this world is a



Sermon & Deeds of the Antichrist (1499-1502) by Luca Signorelli.
Fresco, Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto

type of those that follow, history proceeding forward as a circle ever enlarging..." St. Bonaventure showed how in every part of the Bible there are types both of Christ and of Antichrist.

St. Thomas Aquinas explained: "The devil by suggestion will infuse his wickedness more fully into the Antichrist than into all others. In this way all the wicked who have gone before are signs of the Antichrist."

II. What Will the Antichrist Do?

The activity of the Antichrist will be marked by extraordinarily powerful deceptions. Our Lord said that "false messiahs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." (Mt 24:24)

St. Paul speaks more explicitly of the Antichrist as one "whose coming is by the work of Satan, with all powers and signs, and lying wonders, with all wicked deception in them that perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false..." (2 Thess 2:9-10)

And St. John couples the two names, "the Antichrist" and "the deceiver." He says, "many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the

Antichrist." (2 John 1:7)

Cardinal Newman made a special study of the teachings of the Fathers of the Church concerning the Antichrist. He noted that one of the special characteristics of the Antichrist's persecution will be its work of deceiving. This activity of deception is so much emphasized in Scripture and Tradition that Newman concluded his study by suggesting that the persecution of the Antichrist might not be a persecution of bodily tortures and blood, but rather a persecution of the mind. "After all," he wrote, "perhaps it may not be a persecution of blood and death, but of craft and subtlety only ... Satan may adopt the more alarming weapons of deceit..."

The Antichrist may use frightening methods of force and violence as part of his persuasion. Yet are we alert enough to the more fearful persecution of our minds, to the terrible evil of deception, of taking the false for the True?

"The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist", says the Catechism of the Catholic Church. "Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. (cf. Lk. 18:18, Mt. 24:12) The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the 'mystery of iniquity' in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth." (CCC 675) ✠
