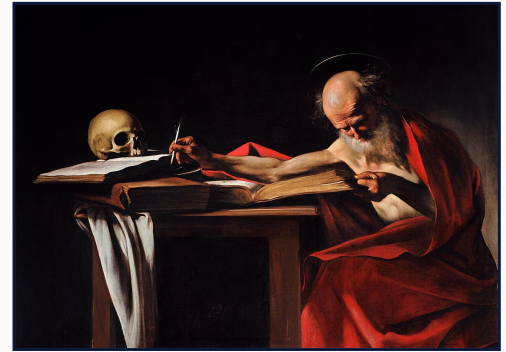


St. Jerome on the Antichrist

What the Doctor of the Church actually says in his Commentary on Daniel

THE SOURCE

WORK	Commentarii in Daniele (Commentary on Daniel), a verse-by-verse commentary on the whole book
WRITTEN	c. AD 407, at Bethlehem — roughly three years after he finished the Latin Vulgate
AUTHOR	St. Jerome, c. AD 347–420. Priest, translator, Doctor of the Church. Feast: 30 September
OCCASION	A refutation of the pagan philosopher Porphyry, who argued Daniel was written after the events it claims to foretell
ENGLISH	trans. Gleason L. Archer (Baker, 1958) — the standard English text



St. Jerome Writing, Caravaggio, 1605–06. Oil on canvas, Galleria Borghese, Rome. Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

THE SETTING: ROME, THEN TEN KINGS

DANIEL 7:7–8

- The fourth beast is Rome — not Greece. Its collapse is the stage on which the Antichrist appears.
- Against Porphyry, who said the little horn was Antiochus Epiphanes, Jerome sides with “the traditional interpretation of all the commentators of the Christian Church”: at the end the Roman world is partitioned among ten kings.
- “Then an insignificant eleventh king will arise, who will overcome three of the ten kings... Then after they have been slain, the seven other kings also will bow their necks to the victor.”

A MAN — NOT THE DEVIL

DANIEL 7:8

- The “eyes like the eyes of a man” in the horn are the proof of his humanity.
- Jerome reads him straight into 2 Thessalonians 2: “the man of sin, the son of perdition... he dares to sit in the temple of God, making himself out to be like God.”

Let us not follow the opinion of some commentators and suppose him to be either the Devil or some demon, but rather, one of the human race, in whom Satan will wholly take up his residence in bodily form.

— ST. JEROME, ON DANIEL 7:8

HIS REIGN — AND ITS LIMIT

DANIEL 7:21–25

- He makes war on the saints and prevails for a time. Persecution is intrinsic to his reign, not incidental to it.
- He speaks against the Most High and “thinks to change times and laws” — an assault on divine worship and on law itself.
- His power lasts “a time, times, and half a time” — three and a half years — and is given to him: permitted by God, and strictly bounded.

ANTIOCHUS IS THE SHADOW

DANIEL 8; 11

- Jerome's governing rule: Antiochus Epiphanes is a type of the Antichrist. What the persecutor did in shadow — desecrating the temple, halting the sacrifice, corrupting men by flattery — the Antichrist will fulfill in reality.

- This is how he answers Porphyry without surrendering the text: Daniel is genuinely historical and genuinely prophetic at the same time.

THE LAST KING AND HIS END

DANIEL 11:36–45

- From 11:36 on, Jerome says the Church's interpreters read the Antichrist, not Antiochus: he “magnifies himself above every god.”
- “He shall not regard the God of his fathers” — Jerome takes this to mean Jewish descent: he is received as the Christ who was refused.
- “Nor the desire of women” — he feigns continence and austerity. The deception is religious before it is political.
- He honors a strange “god of forces” his fathers never knew, and buys loyalty by handing out land and wealth.
- He pitches his tent “between the seas, upon the glorious holy mountain” — Jerusalem — and there “his end shall come, and none shall help him”: destroyed on the very spot from which the Lord ascended (cf. 2 Thess. 2:8).

WHAT JEROME REFUSES TO DO

DANIEL 9; 12

- On the Seventy Weeks he lays out the competing calculations at length — and then declines to rule, leaving the judgment to the reader.
- He ties the 1,290 and 1,335 days to the same three-and-a-half-year span, with the remaining days as an interval of testing before Christ is manifested.
- He will name the Antichrist's character; he will not name his calendar. A Doctor of the Church, on the record, against date-setting.

The Wider Catholic Tradition

Fathers, Doctors and prophecy on the reign of Antichrist — as gathered by Fr. Culleton

THE SOURCE — AND HOW MUCH WEIGHT IT CARRIES

WORK	The Reign of Antichrist — an anthology of Scripture, apocrypha, Fathers, Doctors and private prophecy, arranged chronologically and numbered. The entries contradict one another on purpose.
AUTHOR	Rev. R. Gerald Culleton (1902–1950), a compiler rather than a theologian — he says so himself, and “as a rule avoids expressing his own views”
PUBLISHED	TAN Books and Publishers, 1974 (originally published 1951)
WEIGHT	TAN's own caution: prophecies of the saints are not de fide, and most biblical prophecy concerning Antichrist “[has] not been given official interpretation.” The authority here belongs to the Scriptural spine — 2 Thessalonians 2, Daniel, the Apocalypse — and to the Doctors. The private revelations are devotional colour, and are marked as such below.

A PERSON, NOT A MOVEMENT

IDENTITY

- St. John always uses the singular — man of sin, son of perdition, the wicked one — and keeps him distinct from the many “antichrists.” As Hervé puts it, “a group could not propose itself for worship in a temple.”
- St. Thomas Aquinas: “As in Christ dwells the fulness of the Godhead so in Antichrist the fulness of all wickedness — not indeed in the sense that his humanity is to be assumed by the devil into unity of person, but that the devil by suggestion infuses his wickedness more copiously into him than into all others.”
- He keeps his free will; the devil works on him by instigation, “as it was said of Judas: Satan entered into him.” This is Jerome's point at Daniel 7:8, eight centuries earlier.

TRIBE AND EXTRACTION

SUAREZ · HIPPOLYTUS · IRENAEUS

- Suarez, following Sts. Jerome, Ambrose and Sulpicius Severus: of Jewish extraction, professing Judaism “not through real devotion, but through hypocrisy, in order more easily to persuade... that mysterious race to receive him as their Messias.” The ground is John 5:43.
- Of the tribe of Dan — St. Hippolytus from Genesis 49:17 (“Let Dan be a serpent...”); St. Irenaeus from Jeremiah 8:16, noting that Dan is the one tribe omitted from the sealed tribes of Apocalypse 7.
- Aquinas reports it only as an opinion: “Some say Antichrist is of the tribe of Dan.” Faber likewise: “Certainly a Jew — uncertain if of tribe of Dan.”

BIRTH — A PARODY OF THE ANNUNCIATION

DAMASCENE · ADSO · BRIDGET

- St. John Damascene: illegitimate, and under the devil's “full and perpetual possession from his very sinful conception”; his mother will proclaim she bore him while remaining a virgin.
- Adso the Monk: “As the Holy Ghost came into the heart of Mary, so will the devil enter into the mother of Antichrist.” St. Bridget: “As Christ was born from the highest type of womanhood, so Antichrist will be born from the lowest.”
- Handle with care. Culleton's own editor flags that St. Thomas denies several of these accounts. This is devotional literature, not doctrine.

THE RISE — LIBERATOR, NOT CONQUEROR

FABER · AGREDA · EPHREM

- Faber: his power is not inherited — it is “got by degrees, by fraud, talent, and iniquitous diplomacy.”

- Ven. Mary of Agreda: he comes to oppressed peoples promising relief, rules the conquered gently “by exacting a very small tribute,” declares himself “the Saviour of all the oppressed,” and never lets it be known that he seeks a world kingdom — until he marches on Jerusalem. The kings “will laugh at it and not pay any attention to this little horn.”
- St. Ephrem: money is the bait — “he will entice many Christians with money and goods to apostatize... free land, riches, honor and power.” Adso: “His first converts will be kings and princes.”
- Why he is received at all — John 5:43: “I am come in the name of my Father, and you receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive.”

THE REIGN — THREE AND A HALF YEARS

HIPPOLYTUS · IRENAEUS · AQUINAS

- 1,260 days · forty-two months · “a time, times, and half a time.” It is the one number the whole tradition agrees on — Daniel, Apocalypse 13:5, Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Victorinus, Faber. The same span Jerome gives.
- Seat at Babylon, metropolis at Jerusalem; he restores the Temple and sets his throne in it (Adso, St. Anselm, Rabanus Maurus).
- The dissenting reading, from Aquinas: others “maintain that never will Jerusalem or the temple be rebuilt, and that he will sit in the Church in the sense that many from the Church will receive him.” St. Augustine: he and his adherents “will form a Church just as Christ and his followers are a Church.”
- Faber, on the structure of his régime: “He has an attendant pontiff” — the regal and prophetic offices separated. The second beast is a false Elias heralding a false Christ.

HIS DOCTRINE

ST. HILDEGARD · FABER

- St. Hildegard — he lures men “by granting them complete exemption from the observance of all divine and ecclesiastical commandments, by forgiving them their sins and requiring of them only their belief in his divinity.”
- “Religion he will endeavor to make convenient... He will preach free love and tear asunder family ties... He will maintain sin and vice are not sin and vice. Briefly, he will declare the road to Hell is the way to Heaven.”
- Faber's outline: he denies the divinity of Christ; asserts that he is the Messiah; introduces the worship of devils; is at heart an atheist, yet begins by affecting respect for the law of Moses; and works lying miracles, a false resurrection and a mock ascension.

The Wider Catholic Tradition (continued)

Fathers, Doctors and prophecy on the reign of Antichrist

THE MIRACLES — AND THEIR LIMIT

AQUINAS · A LAPIDE · BELLARMINÉ

- Aquinas sets the rule: “No one can perform a true miracle against the faith, because God is not a witness of falsity.” They are lying wonders — the senses deceived, or real effects worked “by the power of natural causes,” as Pharaoh’s magicians made real frogs.
- Cornelius a Lapide — the most useful detail in the book: “he will not lay his hands on the sick until they have denied Christ. A great multitude of sick will flock to Antichrist.”
- St. Robert Bellarmine: “The executioners of Antichrist will work wonders while the Christians will be powerless in such matters.”

THE MARK

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM · HILDEGARD

- St. Cyril of Jerusalem: the mark on the forehead or right hand — and he “will starve to death all those who refuse to receive it.”
- St. Hildegard reads it as a sacrament in reverse: “a hellish symbol of Baptism, because thereby a person will be stamped as an adherent of Antichrist and also of the Devil.”

THE APOSTASY AND THE PERSECUTION

CYRIL · GREGORY · AQUINAS · FABER

- St. Cyril of Jerusalem: two-thirds of mankind decoyed or forced to his worship; “the remaining third part of men will most steadfastly continue true to the faith and worship of Jesus Christ.”
- The clergy go first. St. Gregory the Great: “In those days, near the end, hardly a Bishop, but an army of priests and two-thirds of the Christians will join the Schism.”
- Aquinas names the target: “the predicted revolt must be against the Catholic Faith of the Roman Church... a proper sign of the coming of Antichrist is the revolt against Rome.”
- St. Hildegard: the torture is calibrated to produce apostasy rather than death — the executioners “endeavor to prolong their pain until they renounce their faith.”
- Faber, on what survives: “there will be hardly any Mass... the majority of Christians will apostatize, but the Church will not be destroyed.” And: “Saints will be greater than ever — martyrs greater, as the first fought against men, the latter will fight against devils.”

ENOCH AND ELIAS

THE TWO WITNESSES

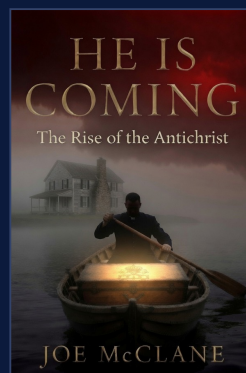
- They preach 1,260 days in sackcloth; Antichrist kills them and leaves them unburied; they rise after three and a half days and ascend in a cloud in his sight.
- St. Robert Bellarmine holds their return “most true,” and calls the contrary opinion “either heretical or approaching heresy.”

HIS FALL

2 THESS. 2:8 · MOUNT OLIVET

- Scripture’s word: the Lord Jesus “will slay him with the breath of His mouth and destroy him by the brightness of His coming.”

- The mock ascension is the trap. St. Hildegard has him gather his worshippers to watch him rise — the ascent “prepared by the artful employment of ingenious devices” — and “at the moment of the ascension a bolt of lightning will overwhelm and annihilate him.”
- Mount Olivet is the recurring detail — Sibylla Tiburtina, Adso, Rolle, Faber, and Aquinas: “Michael will kill him on Mt. Olivet whence Christ ascended into Heaven.” Precisely where Jerome puts his end.
- Then forty-five days between his death and the Judgment — “space for repentance,” and a world that imagines itself safe. Aquinas: “the wicked will think themselves to be in peace and security after the death of Antichrist... seeing that the world is not at once destroyed.”



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