

HISTORY
OF
ANTICHRIST

Rev. P. Huchede

PRESUMED NUMBER OF ANTICHRIST

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OF
ANTICHRIST

OR

AN EXPOSITION OF CERTAIN
AND PROBABLE EVENTS WHICH CONCERN THE
"MAN OF SIN," HIS REIGN, HIS TIME, AND END,
ACCORDING TO HOLY SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

by

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And none of the wicked shall understand,
but the learned shall understand.

(Dan. 12:10)

TAN BOOKS AND PUBLISHERS

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

A few comments are in order regarding the republication of this book.

The title *History of Antichrist* I believe could have been more accurately translated from the French by "The Case of Antichrist" or "The Matter of Antichrist." The French word *histoire* in its primary sense of course means "history". But Larousse's English-French Dictionary gives several secondary translations for this word, one of which is "matter", in the sense "the matter of . . ." But it seems to me that "case" would much better convey the idea intended by the author. In any event, "history" is an unsatisfactory word simply because it connotes past time; whereas, this volume deals with the future.

The reader should bear in mind that this book appeared in English in 1884, and thus will the author speak of "1800 years since Christ" and so forth, which of course was correct for his century.

This brings up a further question: Why republish a work of 1884? I believe the reader will understand why once he gets into the book. For the author has written an erudite treatise which is at the same time quite readable. Basing his comments on Sacred Scripture and on the Fathers, Doctors, and Saints of Catholic Church, he is working with material not quickly or easily dated. This, added to his lucid style and frequent citing of sources, makes the book still worth reading today.

Two further questions might also be asked: Why publish a book on Antichrist at all? and What value will this one be? To the first of these questions a number of perhaps almost obvious answers can be given. As the author points out, the tradition concerning Antichrist preponderantly favors the position that he will come, that he will be an individual man, that he will rule throughout the world, that he will receive even some of the elect, that he will be the consummation of all evil and thereby the antithesis of Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Now the very nature of this man's life justifies publication of a book about him. The more people who are aware of his coming and of his character, the fewer, it would seem obvious, will succumb to his wiles. As to the value of this particular volume, a reading should give that answer. Basically, its value lies in the scholarly and calm rendition of the writer, based upon the very solid foundations of the Bible and the writings of the Church's greatest minds. Thus, a topic which could be presented in an emotional manner is handled with dignity and learning, a fact that should render this weighty and little-discussed subject all the more sobering.

The reader will find a few footnotes in this edition. These I have written and entered usually in the interset of clarifying or supporting the thesis of the author, or of giving the translation of Latin passages, which in the day of the writer would have been understood by most readers but which a relative few today can read. It should be noted that the Imprimatur of this book does not apply to the footnotes. Even though most of the opinions expressed in the footnotes come from imprimatured books and are, it is thought, in agreement with the teachings of the Church, they reflect the view of the publisher only and should be taken only on their OWN merits.

The one great change in this text compared with the original English version concerns capitalization and punctuation. All capitalization and punctuation in this edition have been brought into agreement with the best American usage, as I understand it. The translator apparently transcribed the French punctuation almost exactly, which created many errors in the English version. A most free hand had to be used in weeding out unnecessary commas and capitals and in rearranging other punctuation marks, but always with a view to clarifying the author's words. Otherwise, the text is exactly that of the original.

Besides this, a few French-form names, such as "Augustin" and "Bellarmin" were rendered into the English form, plus, the spelling of a few words was changed from what might have been preferred spelling in the last century to what is preferred today.

The scores of references to the Bible were checked for accuracy, and where, perhaps due to a printer's or translator's error, there occurred a discrepancy, I have found where the passage appears and changed the reference without footnoting the change. References to writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church are basically as they appear in the original English edition; the form of reference used in the original is not consistent, and this variation has been carried over to the present edition in the interest of accuracy.

I trust that these changes, while leaving the author's original text, will make reading easier and understanding more fruitful.

Thomas A. Nelson

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INTRODUCTION

What utility is there to be derived from a book on Antichrist? Everything concerning him is problematic; we know nothing of him but what is vague, uncertain, conjectural and all that interests mystical curiosity. Such were my impressions on commencing the study of the "Man of Sin," the end of the world, and the signs which will be the fore-runners of the terrible event.

The prediction concerning Antichrist is indeed very obscure. This, however, is the nature of prophetic language, which in general deals much in allegorical and figurative terms, indiscriminately mingling the present, past, and future, revealing only some accidental circumstances of facts, saying nothing of what they substantially are and leaving to time the office and care of classifying them in a logical and historical order. Hence it is that the event alone often gives the solution to certain difficulties met with in the Sacred Scriptures. How many and even ordinary actions in the life of Our Lord have served to enlighten the Apostles and Doctors of the Church relative to various passages of the Old Testament, which has led St. Augustine to say: *Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, et Vetus in Novo patet*— "while the New Testament lies hid in the Old, the latter is revealed in the New."

We can safely say that the prophecies of the Old and the New Testament, not as yet fulfilled, are for us what the prophecies relative to our Saviour were for the Jews before His coming, namely, sealed books. The events connected with the end of the world will alone remove the mystery in which the sacred text is at present enveloped.

It does not enter into the scope of this little book to attempt an explanation of those mysteries in which the greatest theologians and even some of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church have failed.

Still it would be a gross error to maintain that nothing certain or probable can be known in the matter.

The Jews of old knew when and of what race the Messiah would be born. They know also the object of his coming and the miracles He would perform. The Christians, likewise, know many things concerning Antichrist—his origin, mission, miracles, and death, as also the time of his apparition.

In the Sacred Scriptures, many prophecies have for their direct or literal object some other person who personates Antichrist, though in an indirect manner, as well as the events which, while being of the same nature, are a much milder form than those that will take place during the reign of the wicked one.

St. Paul, St. John, St. Jude, and St. Peter recall to the mind of the faithful what they had already told them relative to the end of time. And there can be no doubt as to the existence of an oral tradition on this subject. All those of the Fathers who speak of Antichrist assert that they hold from the Apostles or their immediate successors certain scriptural explanations, certain details purely traditional which relate to the matter and which agree in many points. And finding that this harmony exists, the Fathers must be considered as witnesses of this tradition and consequently worthy of our unqualified credence, for the severest critic

has faith in the unanimous testimony of many enlightened, virtuous, and prudent men, as unquestionably were the Fathers of the Church.

When the teaching of the Fathers is founded only on personal authority, or on an only and uncertain testimony, our love and esteem for them claim our respect for their opinion and require us to give it a place among those that are probable, or when truth requires it, to abandon their opinion with deference for their honor and authority. Such is the scope proposed by this little work.

I have endeavored, as far as possible, to avoid two extremes: I wish on the one hand to avoid being an extravagant critic and on the other hand a dupe of credulity, so that I may furnish no weapons which the impious might wield against truth or religion. I have labored to discern what is intelligible in the prophecies bearing on this subject, to lay it before the mind of the reader, and leave what is mysterious to be explained by the event.

Not only have I assured myself that the doctrine contained in this book is orthodox, but also that it is most useful to know it. God having made nothing in vain, it would be rash and even blasphemous to say that the study of a revealed truth is useless, moreover, since we are assured by the Apostle that all Scripture inspired of God is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice. [2 Tim. 3:16].

Hence, what revelation teaches relative to Antichrist is useful for our instruction; it is salutary food for our intelligence and consequently should not be despised. For as St. Thomas says: "The knowledge of the simplest truth in the superior order gives us more pleasure than a perfect knowledge of the sublimest truths of an inferior order." (*Summa contra Gentes*, lib. 1. C. VIII). It is also useful to strengthen our religious convictions. Is there anything in fact better calculated to inspire us with confidence in the divine promises? The fact of our Saviour revealing the trials and persecutions to which His faithful children would be subjected shows that it was not through inability or want of foresight that He left them exposed like lambs in the midst of wolves. He could in an instant give them the strength of the lion, but He preferred to manifest his power in the feeble and confound the strong by the helpless.

Finally, it is useful for our correction, for it enables us to see and baffle the designs of the devil - our enemy - pointing out to us his snares, engaging us to employ the means necessary to resist him in temptation and thus correct our impatience and presumption. Hence it was that the Fathers often preached these prophecies to the faithful in order to enlighten, instruct, and fortify them against the dangers of persecutions.

May this little book enlighten and teach the faithful, scandalized perhaps at what they see done against the Holy Catholic Church and her august Pontiff, that the actual persecutions, like those of the past, enter into the plan of divine Providence, that it must be borne with fortitude, and believe that our Mother, weak in appearance, but in reality strong as God Himself, shall never see the gates of hell prevail against her and will finish by triumphing over her enemies.

Chapter 1—The Preparation

ARTICLE I—THE REMOTE PREPARATION

1. God's Design

God frequently punishes sinful man by delivering him up to a reprobate sense (Rom. 1:28) and to the tyranny of the passions of his heart (Rom. 1:24) as the reward of his contempt of divine love. When the whole world shall renounce Christ and reject the authority of His Church, when men shall say like the Jews of old, we will not have this man to reign over us, (Luke 19:14), We have no king but Caesar, (Jn. 19:15), the vengeance of God shall be swift and terrible. His treatment of the world shall be like to that of individuals. He shall respond to its criminal desires, which stifles the love of those saving truths, by the light of which the ship of state can alone be safely piloted through the siren dangers to which it is constantly exposed. He shall deliver it up to the man of sin who shall consign it to the darkness of vice and error since it rejected the light of truth and virtue. (2 Thes. 2). Satan shall have universal sway for awhile over all nations.

The Holy Catholic Church, which has fought the battles of Christ for eighteen hundred years, is therefore destined to pass through a persecution compared to which those that she has suffered up to the present time are insignificant. St. Augustine classifies them under three general headings. The first he calls violent, on account of the cruelty with which the early Christians were treated by the Roman Emperors, while at a later period the Church suffered from the deception of false brethren, a trial much more insidious than the former, as it was more dangerous. But the persecution of Antichrist will combine both forms and will consequently prove more redoubtable than when one form only had to be contended with.

2. Who is Antichrist

The word "Antichrist" is composed of two Greek words, anti, against, and XPISTOS, Christ, which signifies against Christ. He shall be supremely inimical to Jesus Christ. This name, or rather surname, is given him by Holy Scripture, which calls him also "the Man of Sin," "the Son of Perdition," (2 Thes. 2:3), "the Beast that ascended out of the abyss," (Apoc. 11:7), "the abomination of desolation." (Dan. 9:27).*

The Fathers and theologians regard him as the most impious of men. As for his family name, that is not known; still it is known that the number obtained from the addition of the Greek letters with which it is written will be 666. "Behold wherein wisdom cometh," says St. John in the Apocalypse, "let him that understands count the number of the beast, for it is the number of the man." It is the number 666. Many other names, and among them "Mohamet", are composed of this number. St. John calls this number "the number of the man" because the number 6,

*The texts taken from Daniel in this little work are often taken in a mystical sense authorised by tradition. [Author's footnote]

which designates the day on which man was created, enters into its composition in three different ways, namely, in its concrete form, 6, and as a multiple of 10, 60, [and as a] multiple of 100, [600] equals in all, 666. This triple ratio of 6 points out the threefold prevarication and malediction of Satan, Antichrist's cruel master and tyrant. Satan prevaricated and was cursed in heaven; he prevaricated and was cursed in the serpent in paradise. Finally, he will prevaricate a third time, and will be cursed in Antichrist, whom he shall employ to allure the world and drag it into the abyss. (Cornel. - a Lapide).

The contemporaries of Antichrist who are enlightened by the Sacred Scriptures will alone be able to discover the solution to this problem. Such was the case with those who were contemporary with Jesus Christ, of whom Antichrist will be the counterpart. The Jews knew full well that Christ would come, but they ignored the name that He would bear.

3. Will There be an Antichrist

Some have thought that the word Antichrist is only a generic term by which all the enemies of Christ are designated, a word comprising in its signification all heretics, schismatics, apostates, infidels - in a word, all the impious or antichristian empire. St. John seems to hold this opinion when he says, "Even now there are become many Antichrists. He who denieth that Jesus is the Christ, this is Antichrist." (1 Jn. 2:18-22). But that this supposition is erroneous is proved by the context of the same epistle. "Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now there are many Antichrists."

Let it be remembered that in the Greek or original text, the article *o* is employed in connection with Antichrist in the first instance, and not in the second, and the Greek article serves to determine persons and things; whence, it follows that St. John did not mean that all the enemies of Jesus Christ were to be comprised in one generic term expressed by the word "Antichrist". On the contrary, he very succinctly, but clearly, distinguishes Antichrist personally from all the other adversaries of Christ.

Moreover, the Sacred Scriptures speak of Antichrist in various places as being a particular person or individual. "The Man of sin," "Son of Perdition," terms such as these cannot mean a collective body since the individual is specifically pointed out, while it is easy to explain why St. John employs the same word to distinguish the enemies and adversaries of Christ. The similitude of tendencies and actions suffices to justify the identity of names. The priests, prophets, and kings of the old law were called "Christs". This, however, did not hinder the Jews from believing in the coming of Christ, the Anointed par excellence, source of all sacerdotal, prophetic, and royal unction. And is not the same thing true of Antichrist and the Antichrists, that is, of the enemies of Christ? But there shall come an Antichrist of whom all the others are only the precursors. And this Man of Sin will combine in himself all the malice collectively found in all the others. All the Fathers and theologians unanimously concur in this belief as to Antichrist's individuality. And

consequently, his personal existence and future event must be considered as an object of divine faith, such as stated by Suarez and Bellarmine.

4. Antichrist Foretold and Prefigured

Before the coming of our Divine Saviour there were many prophecies and figures given of Him. It shall be the same for Antichrist. The prophet Daniel speaks of him in a literal and mystical sense in three different chapters, namely, 7, 9, and 11, while St. Matthew ⁽²⁴⁾, St. Mark ⁽¹³⁾, St. John ⁽⁵⁾, and St. Paul in 2 [nd] Epistle to the Thessalonians ⁽²⁾, St. John in his 1 [st] and 2 [nd] Epistles, and especially in the Apocalypse ⁽¹³⁾, etc. tell us of his future or coming event.

Since he will be the incarnate evil and according to the expression of St. Irenaeus (c. 28, lib. 5), the maximum of malice, "recapituiatio universae iniquitatis," the Fathers are justified in applying to him all the passages in the Sacred Scriptures in which there is question of the actions of God and His Church.

We are therefore justified in asserting that Antichrist has been prefigured by the persecutions of the Church, by all the enemies of Jesus Christ, whatever may have been the form under which they have existed. Cruel persecutors such as the Caesars represent his future cruelty towards those who will remain faithful to God. Hypocritical persecutors such as Julian the Apostate are typical of his deception and consummate hypocrisy. Heresy and schism, but above all the indredulity and impiety of our time, are the prelude to the great Apostasy into which he will cause many to fall. Finally, those who give themselves up to their passions and who drink from the pool of iniquity form themselves to his image and likeness, which explains the words of St. Paul when he said, "For the mystery of iniquity already worketh." (2 The^s. 2:7).

ARTICLE II—ACTUAL PREPARATION

AS the mystery of evil is always in labor, it is useful to take a passing glance at the city of actual evil, in order that we may better understand how our contemporaries prepare the way for the coming of the "Man of Sin."

1. Political Preparation

A few centuries ago it was quite a difficult problem for theologians to explain how Antichrist would bring the world under his political and religious dominion. But in our time it is easy to conceive the possibility of such a feat.

Communication with all parts of the world is now rendered easy by means of steam and electricity. People of different nations intermingle. The remotest parts of Asia and Africa are no longer impenetrable; they are on the point of entering into the European movement. The difference

of manners and customs tends to disappear; every obstacle to a universal fusion of ideas seems to vanish; small nationalities are absorbed by the greater ones, which in turn may one day become the prey of a more powerful one. And such a preponderance is NOW quite manifest as regards resources, of which the Jews are the rulers, while there are combined forces secretly working to pervert public opinion throughout civilized nations and destroy Catholic influence.

Evidently WE are rapidly drifting towards the time when all nations will blend in one universal fusion of political unity. The great conqueror of modern times* seemed to realize this when he said: "In fifty years hence, Europe will be either Cossack or a republic."*** Hence the possibility of the political empire of Antichrist is evidently quite feasible.

2. Religious Preparation, Both Intellectual and Moral

But HOW shall he deprive the world of Christianity and have himself adored as God? Alas, it is only too true that the minds and hearts of men are admirably disposed for revolution and consequently ready to accept and bear the cruel yoke of such a tyrant.

Revolution as the word itself implies means a subversion, but a subversion of all that is true, good, beautiful, and grand in the universe. It is the subversion of religion, representing its dogmas as myths and its moral teachings as tyrannical. It is the subversion of authority. Licentiousness under the name of liberty becomes the order of the day; each one is invested with the right to govern himself.

It is the subversion of reason: and do WE not find leading minds in some of the most enlightened nations denying the principle of contradiction and maintaining the absolute identity of all beings?

Revolution is therefore essentially destructive, and it becomes cosmopolitan by the action of secret societies scattered throughout the world. Is it not true to say that the "mystery of iniquity" is prepared in secret revolutionary dens?

But it does not suffice to destroy; it is absolutely necessary to build up again. The world cannot subsist long in a vacuum. It must have a religion; it must have a philosophy; it must have an authority. Revolution will furnish all these.

Instead of the reasonable and supernatural religion of Jesus Christ, Revolution will preach Pantheism. The God-humanity will impart the theurgic spirit and thus lead men to adore the demon as the author of universal emancipation.*** "Haste to MY aid," exclaims one of the most rational of revolutionists. "The faith of my fathers made thee the enemy of God and His Church, but as for me I shall promulgate thy doctrine and ask thee for nothing."

"Haste, Satan, haste, thou who art calumniated by priests and rulers; haste that I may press thee to MY heart; we have known each other

*A reference to Napoleon.

**That is, either a police state or a republic.

***I interpret this sentence to mean, "Antichrist will impart the spirit of miracles and thus lead..."

long. Thy works, O cherished one of my heart are not always good and pleasing, but they give tone to the universe and save it from being absurd. What would justice be without thee? An instinct. What would reason be? A routine. What would man be? A beast. Thou alone dost impart prosperity to all; by thee riches are enobled. Thou art an excuse for authority and the seal of virtue. Hope on proscribed one! The only arm that I can wield in thy service is my pen, but that is worth millions of bulletins! (Prudhon quoted by Bishop Dechamps in the Christ and Antichrist).

What frightful immorality must follow in the train of this shameless prostitution of religion! Never has the threefold concupiscence made greater ravage among mankind. And this is the religion sought and hoped for as the cherished boon of the aspirations of our modern free thinkers.

To our Christian philosophy, the honor of humanity's revolution will substitute a babel of extravagant and absurd ideas. Instead of a mild and efficient authority consecrated alike by Church and state, despotism and anarchy will rise up and contend for the shreds of religious liberty and human policy.

Alas, it must be confessed that the advocates of error are on the increase; the number of depraved characters become ^(s) more and more numerous. And if the state of perversion continue for a while longer, Antichrist may come, for he will find the world prepared to receive and serve him.

O homines ad servitutum promptos!*

Tacitus

ARTICLE III—PROXIMATE PREPARATION

1. Origin of Antichrist

Relative to the origin of Antichrist, erroneous, probable, and truthful things have been said. We shall endeavor to sift the truth on the subject.

In the first place, it is not true that Antichrist will be the son of the devil, born of woman, as Jesus Christ was born of Mary by the operation of the Holy Ghost (St. August.), human generation, outside the laws of nature, is a work of the creative power and belongs to God alone. Nevertheless, theologians as Suarez and Bellarmine observe that the devil has power to produce illusions in this matter. Antichrist will not be the devil, born of a fantastic virgin, clothed in flesh and blood, as it was believed by St. Hippolytus of Antioch; nor will he be an incarnate demon, as Jesus was an incarnate God, according to Origen's opinion.

*Literally, "O man, how prompt to slavery!"

Some Christians of the primitive ages of the Church believed that Nero was Antichrist. (SuJpit lib. histor.). They were under the impression that this emperor did not die, or that if he did, he was to rise from the dead before the end of time to come and persecute the Church. St. Augustine regards this opinion as mere presumption. [Lib. 20, c. 19, City of God]. St. John Damascus* and some other Fathers are of opinion that Antichrist will be an illegitimate offspring. [Lib. iv, ch. 27, Orthodoxy of Faith]. Holy Scripture says nothing of this, at least in an explicit manner, and tradition bearing on it is not unanimous enough to merit for it anything more than a probable certainty. It is also probable that he will be of the tribe of Dan. St. Irenaeus in book 5th on Heresies; St. Hippolytus of Antioch; St. Augustine in his book on the benediction of the Patriarchs (c. 7); St. Prosper, part iv of the Promises and Benedictions of the Fathers; Theodoret, question 109 in Genesis; St. Gregory, book 31 on Morals affirm it, founding the truth of this assertion on the three following passages of Holy Scripture: "Let Dan be a snake in the way, a serpent in the path, that biteth the horses heels that his rider may fall backwards" [Gen. 49:17]. "The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan, all the land was moved at the sound of the neighing of his warriors; and they came and devoured the land and all that was in it; the city and its inhabitants" [Jer. 8:16].

Finally, we see in the 7[th] chapter of the Apocalypse that all the tribes furnish their quota to the heavenly Jerusalem, except that of Dan, of whom there is nothing said on account of the hatred borne to Antichrist. However, the Fathers cited above, in their explanations of these texts, seem to have paid no attention to tradition and only gave their personal opinion on the matter. And furthermore, these texts are susceptible of another interpretation. The words of Genesis may be understood of Sampson as well as of Antichrist. These of Jeremias, in their literal sense, refer to Nabuchodonosor. Finally, the tribe of Dan is not the only one that is omitted in the enumeration of the Apocalypse. That of Ephraim is also omitted, but some commentators say that it is not omitted, being substituted by that of Joseph. Hence this omission might have been made for a different motive than the one assigned by these Fathers. This opinion, being that of a great many holy Doctors, is not more certain, however, than the first and does not merit a higher degree of credence than a probable opinion. In any case, it would be very difficult to prove this origin since the Jewish genealogies have perished.

It is certain that Antichrist will be a man because the Scriptures call him in express terms the "man of sin," (2 The^{s.} 2) and leave us under this impression when they speak of him in direct terms. Finally, it is certain that he will be of the Jewish race. Tradition bears us out on this point.

Antichrist, according to St. Jerome and other Fathers, will be born in Babylon (Jerome in Dan. 11), which may be figuratively said of the society of the impious.

*Usually referred to as St. John Damascene (690-749).

2. His Education

Like Our Lord, he will be brought up in obscurity; he will lead a hidden life until the time comes when he shall begin his public career. This assertion is founded on the words of Daniel (11:21), "And there shall stand up in his place one despised, and the kingly honor shall not be given him, and he shall come privately and shall obtain the kingdom by fraud."

According to tradition, he will be educated by magicians who will imbue his mind and heart from his very childhood with their doctrine and wicked principles; God neither depriving him of his liberty nor denying him sufficient grace, will suffer the devil to tempt him and take possession of him. St. Anthony does not hesitate to say (Part 4 and 13, c. 4. par. 3) that although he will not be deprived of his guardian angel, nevertheless, all the angel's efforts to do him good shall be paralysed by his obstinate persistency in evil.

By his own choice and under the tutorship of Satan's agents he will grow up in the knowledge and practice of evil until the time comes when he shall commence his public career. (Dan. 8:23).

3. His Character

St. Cyril of Jerusalem says that "his malice will surpass the combined wickedness of all the evil doers gone before him (Catechism 15) and that he will be like an ocean in which all human and diabolical wickedness shall meet." Some theologians, and among them Suarez in his *Memorati*, assert that he shall never do a good act, being the counterpart of Our Saviour, who never did an evil deed - that he shall be like the devil, buried in wickedness. (1 Jn. 5:18-19).

Among his predominant vices, his satanic pride shall be especially conspicuous. Like Lucifer, he shall even attack Almighty God, according to the prophet Daniel (11:36-37) and St. Paul (2 Thes. 2:4); he shall follow the lust of women. Finally, on account of his most cruel instincts, the Sacred Scriptures compare him to the most ferocious beasts (Apoc. 13:2): "And the beast which I saw was like to a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion, and the dragon gave him his own strength and great power." At the same time he will adroitly conceal all his crimes and pass for the most virtuous of men, as stated by St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Cat. 15), St. John Damascus (c. 27), St. Hippolytus (book on the end of time).

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was loaded with approbrium on the cross, though being the model par excellence of all virtues, as stated by Jean Jacques Rousseau. Antichrist on the contrary, worthy of all confusion and ingominy, will be loaded with honors. United with this consummate ability, he will possess a natural, vast, and powerful genius, an irresistible eloquence ("and there was given to him a mouth speaking great things." - Apoc. 13:5), for according to St. Anselm in his *Elucidations*, his wisdom and eloquence will surpass all possible realization known or imagined; he will know by heart all the Sacred Scriptures and

possess a perfect knowledge of all the arts. Still, all this gives but a very imperfect idea of the extraordinary resources he will possess to attain his end.

4. His Means of Action

To insure the success of his enterprise, he will employ means that naturally secure the service of men, such as imposture, recompence, violence and miracles.

I. Imposture

By his deceitful craft he will detach the minds and hearts of all peoples from the religion of Jesus Christ. By his incomparable eloquence he will represent Jesus as an imposter; he will attack His doctrine and institutions, according to the teachings of st. Cyril of Jerusalem (Cat. 15), Damascus (c. 27), Jerome (in his work on the prophet Daniel).

After having weakened the faith of Christ in the minds and hearts of many, he will proceed to show that the law of Moses still prevails; he will re-establish the Sabbath and all the legal observances; and he will invite all the Jews to re-establish their nationality, after which he will declare himself to be the true messiah; he will endeavor to prove the truth of his assertion from Scripture - he will declare his design of rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple and of bringing the whole world under his dominion. The carnal Jews, finding these projects in perfect harmony with their OWN prejudices, will easily acknowledge for the Messiah the one whom they desire. And after having at first despised and scorned him, they will subsequently receive and proclaim him king. (Dan. 11:21). According to st. Cyril of Jerusalem [Cath. 15], he will win the esteem and attachment of mankind by his urbane and unbounded kindness.

II. Rewards

The wily imposter will join to the illusions of hypocrisy the bait of temporal goods, as there will be no end to his riches. "For he shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and all the precious things of Egypt." (Dan. 11:43). St. Anselm says in his Elucidations that the devils will show him all the money which is hid and all the mines of the precious metals, out of which they will have money minted for him. These immense riches, which he will have distributed among his followers, will soon bring countless numbers to rally round his standard, and they will faithfully carry out his designs in all things. For all things obey money. (Ecclesiastes 10:19). Cupidity is the root of evil, or as the Apostle says: "For the desire of money is the desire of all evils, which some coveting have erred from the faith." (1 Tim. 6:10). Bribes even blind the wise and pervert the words of the just. (Exod. 23:8).

III. Violence

In order to infallibly attain his end, he will employ such violence as will overcome all human resistance; and to use the words of Damascus (book 3, c. 24), by means of the above mentioned factors of his power and strategem, he will bring all men under his tyrannical sway.

IV. His Miracles: Their Nature

It is on the unquestionable authority of miracles that the truth of the Christian religion is established and believed by all those who are sincere seekers of the truth.

This impostor will make use of the same means to create objections against the Church of God. According to St. Paul, his event will be signalized by numerous signs and prodigies due to the operation of Satan; he will work all kinds of miracles, signs, and deceitful prodigies, whose "coming is according to the working of Satan, in all power, in signs and lying wonders, and in all seduction of iniquity to them that perish." (2 Thes. 2:9-10). And we are told in the Apocalypse (13:13) that great will be the things which he will do to deceive mankind. "And he did great signs, so that he made also fire to come down from heaven unto the earth in the sight of men." The same is said of him by the evangelist when he speaks of false prophets and false Christs. (Mark. 13:22). "For there will rise up false Christs and false prophets and they shall show signs and wonders to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect."

Holy Writ furnishes three examples of the miracles that will be wrought by Antichrist: "He shall cause fire to come down from heaven." (Apoc. 13:13). "He shall make the beast speak." (Apoc. 13:15). And finally, he will pass for being dead (Apoc. 13:3), and then he will, as it were, raise himself to life, thus securing the admiration and homage of all men. The holy Fathers are very explicit on this point and give many details on St. Clement, in his work entitled Third Book of Recognitions, a work on which we may rely as being authentic in spite of the rude attacks made upon it, relates as coming from St. Peter himself that the accursed man will have power to perform miracles of beneficence like those of Our Saviour. St. Hippolytus, in his work on the consummation of time, does not hesitate to affirm wonderful things which he apparently held from apostolic tradition. He will heal lepers, make the lame to walk, cast out demons, raise the dead to life. He will know the most secret and hidden things. He will move mountains, walk on the waves of the sea, turn day into night, and vice versa. He will direct the course of the sun at will, and finally, appear as being the master of the elements.

He will therefore appear as having performed miracles similar to all those wrought by Jesus Christ, in order to eclipse His glory and purloin to his own advantage the honors due to the true Messiah. But St. Paul warns us that all those miracles, so numerous and striking, will be the work of deception. "Therefore God shall send them the apparition of error to believe lying." (2 Thes. 2:11). Those miracles will be deceptive in their origin, deceptive in their nature, deceptive in their form, deceptive in their object. Reason and faith assure us that God alone can perform genuine miracles. "Blessed be the Lord and God of Israel, who alone doth wonderful things." (Ps. 71:18). Hence we are sufficiently warned that those miracles which Antichrist would attribute to his own divinity are the work of Satan, the father of lies, who performs - and cannot perform any other than - false miracles.

The greater part of those prodigies will be optical illusions and diabolical charms. Men shall be deceived by appearances, hence the reason why the Scriptures say that he will work miracles before the eyes of man and not in the sight of God. (Apoc. 13:13).

Some of them, it is true, will surpass all human power and will be materially prodigious. This, however, is not to be wondered at. In the hierarchy of beings, man is naturally inferior to the angels, even to the fallen angel, who has preserved his natural qualities. The devils are able to do things which are impossible to man, yet their deeds are miracles relatively and not absolutely, since it does not belong to the province of any created being to perform a miracle properly so called; this requires the intervention of divine power, which belongs to God alone. Consequently, of this latter order of miracles Antichrist will perform none, although some of his prodigies, such as raising the dead to life, which he will seem to do, must have all the appearance of true miracles.

5. His Relations with Satan

Satan will utilize the immense advantage of this wicked man to attain his ends. Satan has been chained by Jesus Christ for one thousand years (Apoc. 20:2), which means that he must remain in the bottom of the abyss until the end of the world, for these thousand years signify the duration of the Church. Others, however, give a more literal interpretation to this chaining of Satan. They are of the opinion that the social dominion of the Church is fixed at a thousand years, commencing with Charlemagne and finishing with the revolutionary era. According to this hypothesis, Satan is already unchained, preparing the way for Antichrist, through whom he will rule the world. This opinion is most probable. According to the other opinion, the power of the demon and the wicked is limited. They cannot do all the evil that they wish to do. It is written that the wicked move in a circuitous manner. The wicked walk round about. (Ps. 11:9 (sic)). After having gone through their evolutions they return again to their point of departure and repeat the ordeal through which they have already passed. This is required by Divine Providence in favour of our weakness. When we are apprised beforehand of the wiles of our enemy, we are better able to evade him. But God has warned us that at the end of the world the angel of darkness shall be let loose for awhile. (Apoc. 20). During this time he will have full liberty to attack the Church and use every artifice possible for its destruction, according to Damascus. (Book 4, c. 27). Antichrist will be his most docile agent, wonderfully adapted to seduce the people.

6. Justification of Divine Providence

By what visible signs can his deceptive or false miracles be discerned from those that are true and genuine? They shall be detected by one only sign, namely, the end for which they will be wrought; their object shall be to persuade the world to accept for truth a palpable lie. The motives of credibility of the Christian religion are so evident that

Hughes of st. Victor might justly say: "Lord, if we are in error, You are the cause of it."

Either the Christian religion is true, or it is false; if it is not true, there is no God, as there can be no medium between truth and error. A God infinitely wise, just, and holy could not suffer the elite of the human race to be made the victims of an artifice so fabricated as to baffle all the powers of man to discover it. If we consult the pages of history, we will find them replete with miraculous facts which prove the divinity of Christianity, facts so evident that their denial would necessarily incur an absolute historical scepticism. If we appeal to science, it testifies in favor of revelation; metaphysics discloses an admirable fitness in the dogmas; logic shows a wonderful chain of connection in the mysteries; ethics shows the perfect harmony that exists between the noble aspirations of the human heart and the evangelical law; physical or natural science shows the constant existing agreement between the certain geological, physiological, ethnographic data and the facts of Scripture which relate to them. We must thence conclude with st. Paul, "But though we or an angel from heaven preach a gospel to you besides that we have preached to you, let him be anathema." (Gal. 1:8).

Let him be anathema who with great power will come and deceive even the elect and place himself up for Christ -to be adored!

Whatever may be the influence that he will exercise over the world, it will be always easy to evade his snares, at least for such as preserve in their heart any vestige of divine faith. Are we not already warned of his coming by Our Divine Lord? Hence it will be our OWN fault if we are deceived by him. Divine Providence is not in fault since it tells and warns us beforehand of the nature and mode of our final trial and exposes to us also its designs of justice and mercy over humanity. Anti-christ will come, says st. Paul, full of allurements for those who wish to perish because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. Therefore, God shall send them the operation of error, to believe lying, that all may be judged who have not believed the truth, but have consented to iniquity. (2 The^s. 2:10-11). The impious alone will fail to comprehend the divine action. (Dan 12:10) "Many shall be chosen and made white and shall be tried as by fire; and the wicked shall deal wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the learned shall understand."

ARTICLE I—CONTEST AND POLITICAL SWAY OF ANTICHRIST

1. Antichrist Begins to Manifest Himself to the Jews

Antichrist, being a Jew, will be circumcised; he will observe the Mosaic Law, and finally he will give himself for the Messiah whom Israel still expects, and he will be received by those whose names are not written in the Book of Life, in the Book of the Lamb. (Apoc. 13:8). Hence Our Lord thus reproaches the Jews, "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." (Jn. 5:43). St. Ireneus, St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and St. Damascus are of opinion that Our Lord makes allusion in this passage to Antichrist.

2. He Achieves the Conquest of the World and Makes Jerusalem its Capital

Antichrist will naturally meet with obstacles in carrying out his designs. The ten kings, who, according to the prophet Daniel and St. John, will have divided the Roman empire among them, shall endeavor to conserve the independence of their realms and consequently will resist him with fire and sword. "I considered," says the prophet, "the horns, and behold another little horn sprung out of the midst of them, and three of the first horns were plucked up at the sight thereof . . . And these ten horns shall be ten kings, and another shall rise up after them, and he shall be mightier than the former, and he shall bring down three kings." (Dan. 7:8 & 24). "He shall take possession of the land; Egypt will not escape his power . . . he shall pass into Libya and Ethiopia." (Dan. 11:42-43). St. Jerome has left us the interpretation of the Fathers, which is corroborated by all ecclesiastical writers who have since treated the question. At the end of the world, after the destruction of the empire, ten kings will divide among them the fragments of the Roman empire; then an eleventh king will enter the scene and conquer three of their number: the king of Egypt, the king of Africa, and the king of Ethiopia. After their death, the remaining seven laid their scepters at the conqueror's feet. (Dan. 7 [esp. 24-25]).

It seems that he will probably be defeated by certain people of the Western nations, who will give him a naval battle, people whom Daniel calls "Romans." (11:30). But he will soon recover from this defeat. St. Ireneus and St. Hippolytus of Antioch concur with St. Jerome in the same opinion, which gives this interpretation of the prophet a theological certitude. When Antichrist shall have conquered all his enemies, power shall be given him over all tribes, peoples, languages, and nations; he will be the first Jew to reign over the whole world. When he shall find himself master of the world, he will choose for [his] capital the city in which Our Lord was crucified. (Apoc. 11:8). If he did otherwise, he would fail to make the Jews receive him for the Messiah since

their hearts will be fixed ON terrestrial glory and Jerusalem, in their esteem, must be the sojourn of the Messiah.

ARTICLE II—CONTEST AND RELIGIOUS SWAY OF ANTICHRIST

1. He Declares Himself to be God and Desires to Establish His Religion Throughout the World

"And they adored the beast, saying, who is like to the beast? and who shall be able to fight with him?" (Apoc. 13:4).

All vile parasites of fortune, astonished at the rapidity with which Antichrist achieves his conquests and also at the unlimited sway of his power, deceived by his prodigies, will prostrate themselves before him and adore him as their god. As soon as he believes himself master of the bodies and souls of all peoples, he will decree and proclaim his divinity and establish a new religion. According to the Apostle, he will lift himself up above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God showing himself as if he were God. (2 Thes. 2:4). He will command all peoples to place his statue in the public places to be worshipped, the image of the beast whose wound was healed. (Apoc. 13:13-15). "He will sit in the temple of God showing himself as if he were God." (2 Thes. 2:4). This temple is probably that of Jerusalem, which he will have rebuilt and in which he will have divine honors paid to him. (Damascus, Book 4, Ch. 37). It is then, according to the prophecy of Daniel and in full force of the term, that the abomination of desolation shall be in the temple, seated in the holy place. (Dan. 9:27). Then he shall think himself able to change times and laws - religious, political, and sacred - by which the world had been governed up to his advent. (Dan. 7:25). Although he will make himself the object of idolatrous worship, he himself will adore a god called Moazim, ignored by his ancestors, and he will load this idol with gold and precious stones. (Dan. 11:38-39).

Our Lord Jesus Christ as man adored His Father. Antichrist will adore his father, Satan, principal author of his power. As for the moral of his religion, we are permitted to believe that he will eliminate from it whatever is painful to corrupt human nature, so that he may more easily gain men over to his party. (Swarez et Bellarm.).

2. His Apostles

In order to propagate his religion, he will send out missionaries to all parts of the world, as Our Saviour sent His Apostles to preach His doctrine. Among the false prophets, there will most probably be one more illustrious than the others, as St. Ambrose remarks, (in Apoc.). St. John describes him as follows: "And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns, like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon." (Apoc. 13:11). And in another passage he seems to point out

three different persons: "And I saw from the mouth of the dragon, and from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs." [Apoc. 16:13]. The dragon, the beast, and the false prophet signify Satan, Antichrist, and the principal apostle of Antichrist. These three different beings command all the other demons. In the work of our redemption, the three divine persons of the adorable Trinity manifested themselves. The Son adores the Father; the Holy Ghost gives glory to the Son. And we see that in the mystery of iniquity Antichrist adores Satan and the false prophet glorifies Antichrist. Hence we have every reason to show that this false prophet will be an individual person and not a collective term to designate the universality of preachers engaged in the service of Antichrist. We can even assert that he will not be a king, nor a general of an army, but a clever apostate, fallen from the episcopal dignity. From being an apostle of the Gospel he will become the first preacher of the false messiah. These conjectures are not devoid of much plausibility. (Acosta, Book 2, Ch. 16). Antichrist will communicate his power of working miracles to others, who will go into different countries and cities to gain new proselytes by all the human and diabolical means in their power. (Acosta, 2, 16). It is thus that the words of Our Lord will be fulfilled. "For there shall rise up false Christs and false prophets, and they shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. Take ye heed, therefore. Behold I have foretold you all things." (Mk. 13:22-23). "And then if any man shall say to you: Lo, here is Christ; lo, he is here, do not believe ... he is in the desert, go ye not out." (Mat. 24:23-26). Benighted apostles who will indeed turn away from truth! (2 Tim. 4:4). They blaspheme the majesty of God and despise all true authority. "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their confusion, wandering stars to whom the storm of darkness is reserved forever." (Jude 1:13). "Fountains without water and clouds tossed with whirlwinds, to whom the midst of darkness is reserved." (2 Pet. 2:17).

Antichrist will furthermore make all men, great and small, rich and poor, freemen and bondmen, bear a sign on their right arm or on their forehead. (Apoc. 13:16). What this sign shall be time alone will reveal. Yet there are some commentators of Holy Writ, who, according to a special revelation, pretend to say that it shall be formed out of the Greek letters X and P,* interlaced like this figure

which resembles the number of Christ. (Cornelius a Lapide in Epis. 2 to Thes.)

No one can either buy or sell without this mark, as distinctly specified in the Apocalypse (13:17). And that no man might buy or sell but he that had the character or the name of the beast or the number of his

*The original text reads "... formed out of the letters X and P Greek ..." which is an obvious error and has been corrected above.

name." None but adorers of this new god can enjoy the possession of riches or honors. This god shall increase their glory and shall give them power over many and shall divide the land for nothing. (Apoc. 13:7).

2. Religious Persecution of Antichrist

1. God and Magog

Those who will refuse to obey his impious orders shall be the object of a terrible and universal persecution. Gog and Magog shall be let loose; they shall come upon the "breath of the earth and encompass the camp of the saints and the beloved city." (Apoc. 20:8). What do these names mean? The Jews pretend that Gog will be Antichrist and Magog the northern people. "At the coming of the Messiah, they shall enter Palestine and lay waste the country to such an extent that the unfortunate citizens will be obliged to burn for fuel the handles of the lances and shields left on the battlefield. But these misfortunes once over, the golden age shall revive." This Thalmudic interpretation of Ezechiel (28) given by st. Jerome cannot be questioned. Some other ecclesiastical writers, notably Eusebius (Book 3, Hist., c. viii) and Lactance (Book c. 44, 25), place the battle of Gog and Magog a thousand years after the death of Antichrist. During those thousand years, Jesus Christ will reign with the saints in this world in the midst of infidels, if not converted at least subjugated. At the lapse of that time Gog and Magog shall appear on the scene and wage a bloody war against the saints. This war shall be closely followed by the end of the world and the last judgment. This is, as may be easily seen, the error of the millennium which has long since been refuted by the Fathers st. Augustine, st. Jerome, and many others. It is probable that Gog and Magog mean Antichrist's combat against the Church. According to Bellarmine, Gog will be Antichrist himself and Magog will be his army. Because Ezechiel always designates Gog as a leader and Magog as a region [Ezech. 38-39], Magog, it is true, is regarded as being the Sythian nation. In Genesis (10:2) the second son of Japeth is said to have borne this name, and the country in which he settled was naturally called after him, and this country, according to Josephus, is Scythia.* In employing this term to designate the army of Antichrist, we are led to infer that the men composing it will be orientals, or what seems more plausible, that his soldiers will possess all the brutality of those barbarous people.

11. His Atrocity

No language can give an adequate idea of the atrocity and effects of this frightful persecution. "I beheld and lo that horn made war against the saints, and prevailed over them." (Dan. 7:21). The beast shall make war against the saints, and shall overcome them and kill them. (Apoc. 11:7). And he "shall crush the saints of the Most High." (Dan. 7:25). And he will put to death all those who will not adore the image of the beast. (Apoc. 13:15). Then shall the truth be oppressed. The Church shall see

*Scythia was an ancient country lying partly north and northeast of the Black Sea and partly east of the Aral Sea in what is now Russia.

her children apostatize in vast numbers, and in the agony of her heart-rending grief, she will cry out in the words of her divine spouse, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mk. 15:34).

Then by order of the tyrant the continual sacrifice shall be abolished. (Dan. 9:27). The holy sacrifice of the Mass shall no longer be offered up publicly on the altars. The Church shall be devastated; the sacred vessels desecrated; the priests shall be scattered and separated from their flocks and put to death. The beauty of the new Sion has vanished! Her priests sigh; her streets resound with wailings and lamentations because there is no one found to assist at the solemnities of the Lamb. The Church has taken up her abode in the catacombs. (Jerem. Thren.).

All the faithful shall be terror-stricken, for there is nothing to equal the ferocity with which the beast will persecute the Church. "The beast which I saw," says St. John, "was like to a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion." (Apoc. 13:2). Those who will refuse him obedience, says St. Gregory (32 Moral., c. 12), shall perish in the midst of the most excruciating torments. They shall be tortured by infernal engines of pain such as had never been thought of before. The persecutors will add to the terror of punishment the prestige of miracles, which makes St. Gregory exclaim in a state of bewilderment, "What a frightful temptation for the human heart! Behold a martyr who delivers over his body to torture, and his executioner performs miracles before his eyes!"* Where is the virtue that would not receive a profound shock in the presence of such a scene? "Woe, then, to land and sea because the devil is come down unto you having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." (Apoc. 12:12). "And a time shall come such as never was from the time that nations began even until that time." (Mat. 24:21; Mk. 13:19).

III. His Duration

"And for the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened." (Mat. 24:22). In order that the faithful may not be discouraged, God has determined the number of years, months, and days of this final persecution.

It is not known how long it will take Antichrist to achieve the conquest of the world, yet we may justly conjecture that the process shall be very rapid. The Prophet informs us that from the moment the perpetual sacrifice shall cease, which shall be the beginning of the general persecution, "they shall be delivered into his hands until a time and times [and] a half a time." (Dan. 7:25). This he repeats in the twelfth chapter, and St. John employs the same expression to signify the time during which the woman, figure of the Church, will tarry in the desert. "And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert unto her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time from the face of the serpent." (Apoc. 12:14). St. Jerome remarks that the term "a time" is generally employed

*The close quotes are placed here as the logical termination of St. Gregory's statement, though the original text left out the end quotation marks.

in Holy Scripture in the sense of a year; the second term "tempora" is translated by the plural form because the Hebrew and Greek texts employ the dual. The words of the sacred text should therefore be interpreted, "a year, two years and a half year." However, the determination of the number of months removes all equivocation on the subject, as specified in the Apocalypse. "And the holy city they shall tread under foot two and forty months," (11:2), which is equivalent to three years and a half. Finally, to remove all possible doubt on the matter, God has even revealed the number of days that the persecution will last: "The abomination of desolation," after the cessation of the perpetual sacrifice, must last, according to the Prophet, "1290 days." (Dan. 12:11). In other words, three years and a half with a few days over. Hence, it is certain that this terrible persecution will last during three years and a half.

3. The War that he will Wage against Religious Societies

I. His Combat with Religious Societies of Human Origin

Schismatics, heretics, and pagans will offer but a cowardly resistance to the formidable enemy of God. They will either become converts of the Catholic Church or proselytes of the archfiend.

II. Combat against the Catholic Church, the Only Religious Society of Divine Origin

The Catholic Church will be made desolate during those three years, but she will remain invincible and unconquered, for God, who is faithful to His word, has said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. (Mat. 16:19). What a sublime spectacle! Man, an intelligent being, the most feeble and despicable of creation, exposed to the attacks of Lucifer, the first among "pure" creatures, and in this fierce struggle, man, aided by God's grace, will be victorious. It is at this juncture that grace will appear in all its grandeur and efficacy. God will not leave His Church a disarmed prey to such a formidable enemy. He will assist Her by invisible and visible means.

III. Ordinary Help that God will Grant to the Holy Catholic Church; Heroic Resistance of the Spouse of Christ

God will impart greater light to the minds of His faithful servants; He will fortify their will[s] and give a patience which St. John eulogizes in the Apocalypse. "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." (13:10). The Holy Scriptures will form the impregnable rampart of the Church. They will be her first and best defense against all the artifices of the impostor, for in them will be found the predictions and explanations of all that will then take place in the world; whence, it is said that the true doctors will understand the mysteries of these latter times, while the impious will fail to understand them, being carried away by the torrent of their impiety. "Many shall be chosen and made white, and shall be tried as fire, and the wicked shall deal wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand." (Dan. 12:10). God, who never fails to raise up men equal to the wants of the times - apostles burning with zeal,

martyrs endowed with undaunted courage, doctors whose learning and erudition vindicated truth in all its beauty - will raise up at this critical juncture a vast number of extraordinary men, adorned with all the noble qualities and virtues of all the saints of preceeding ages. "Who are we," exclaims st. Augustine, "compared to the saints and faithful of those latter times, who shall be called on to resist the attacks of an enemy unchained, whom we can but feebly resist while he is yet in chains?" (20 De Civit c. 8). Oh happy those who will conquer such a tyrant, exclaimed st. Hippolytus. (De Consum. Mund.) They will certainly be far and away more illustrious than their fathers in the Faith, for the first martyrs had to contend only against the satellites of the demon, while they will be victorious over the son of perdition. What praise, what crowns shall be awarded them by Our Lord!

If the Church be compared to an army drawn out in battle array (Cant. 6:9), we have reason to believe that Jesus Christ, its captain, would reserve the best soldiers to withstand the most terrible shock. But the people who know and serve the true and living God shall be victorious. God shall send teachers to instruct his people; they shall rush into the midst of fire and sword; they will be made prisoners and their possessions will be confiscated; some of those teachers shall be cast into a fiery furnace, there to be purified. (Dan. 11:32, etc.).

Not only the saints but also the angels will hasten to the standard of the cross and aid the Church in this her great tribulation; st. Michael the Archangel shall rise and engage in furious combat against the enemy of the people of God. (Dan. 12:1). st. John represents st. Michael fighting against the dragon unchained. (Apoc. 12:7). Finally, God shall prepare a safe retreat for his faithful children in the desert (Apoc. 12:14), which means that God will not allow the demons, all-powerful as they will be, to reveal to the emissaries of Antichrist the hiding places of a great number of Christians, who, though faithful to God, yet have not courage enough to confront the enemy or brave the dangers of so terrible a persecution. All this aid will certainly be greater and more abundant in this last struggle, though quite the same in all ages of the Church; God directs all things by His benign Providence, and He will send Elias and Enoch to aid and sustain His spouse in her last trying ordeal. (Lap. 8, 1).

IV. Extraordinary Success. Elias and Enoch will Return

It is certain that neither Elias nor Enoch are dead. It is written, Enoch walked with God and disappeared. (Gen. 5:22-24). Enoch, according to the wise man, was pleasing to God, who placed him in paradise. (Ecclesiasticus 44:16). And st. Paul says that Enoch was removed, that he might not see death. (Heb. 11:5). The Scripture is still more explicit relative to Elias. He is said to have been walking in company with Eliseus on the banks of the Jordan when he was carried off in a fiery chariot to heaven. (4 Kings 2:11). Ecclesiasticus (48:9) and Machabees (Book 1, 2:58) allude to the same fact. All the Fathers are in perfect accord on this point and teach it as an apostolic tradition; we shall quote here

only St. Irenaeus (Lib. 4, c.30). The disciples of the Apostles say that those who were carried off from this world otherwise than by death were placed in a terrestrial paradise and that they will remain there till the end of the world in an incorruptible state.*

Theologians assign many reasons for this signal favor. They maintain that God desired to show by the preservation of these two men during so many centuries the possibility of the indefinite permanence of man upon earth and to confirm our faith in the general resurrection of the body, for, as the sequel will show, these men shall die and rise again at the Last Judgment.

V. Conjectures on the Place of Their Sojourn and on the Kind of Life They Lead

Where are they? No one knows. Ecclesiasticus says that Enoch was translated to paradise (44:16), whence some of the holy Fathers have concluded that they dwell in the terrestrial paradise; but the term "paradise" is amphibological** and may signify any place of repose and delight, for it appears to be certain that the terrestrial paradise no longer exists, at least since the Deluge. Some of the Fathers, with St. Jerome, believe that they have been translated to some heavenly body. (Hier. in Amos. 9). It is in this way that they account for the fact of Elias being carried off in the heavens. But the word heaven may also mean the atmosphere with which the earth is surrounded. Hence it is more probable that they were conveyed to a part of the earth yet unexplored, a delightful paradise that will not be discovered before the end of the world. (Suarez de Myst. vit. Christi.).

But how do they live in this unknown place since it is certain that they are not yet in a glorified state? They know God only by the same means we do, namely, by faith and reason, or contemplation; they do not behold Him face to face, as do the elect. Their bodies are not yet endowed with the qualities of those that are glorified. However, it is certain that their life is different from ours. As St. Augustine remarks (de peccat. merit. 3), their life is neither of earth nor of heaven. They are no longer pilgrims in this world, and it is very probable that they are unable to merit until they return to this life again. St. Thomas asserts that they live on the fruit of the Tree of Life, which was Adam's food before he sinned. Or, to speak more correctly, with St. Jerome (Epist. ad Panmach.), their bodies are spiritualized, and consequently

*This tradition may elicit skepticism from contemporary readers because we are given to understand today that the entire earth has been fully explored. However, the reader might consult *The Life of Anna Catherina Emmerick* by V. Rev. K. E. Schmoger, C.S.S.R. (Maria Regina Guild, 1968), Vol. 1, pp. 155-57, wherein the author discusses the prophecies of St. Hildegarde (1098-1179) and the visions of Bl. Lidwina of Schiedam (1380-1433) concerning paradise. The views of these two holy women support the opinion above. Notable in Schmoger's treatment is the statement of St. Hildegarde (cited from Scivias, Lib. 1, visio II), "When Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise, as wall of light was raised around it, and the Divine Power effaced from it all marks of their sin. . . Paradise still exists, a region of joy, blooming in all its pristine loveliness, and imparting abundant fruitfulness to the sterile earth."

**That is, "capable of more than one interpretation."

do not need food as we do to sustain life. If they use any, it must be a spiritual food which God knows how to furnish. This opinion of St. Jerome is very probable since this kind of food suits best those who live on the word of God and who take their delight in contemplating His perfections. (Bernard, Serm. 6, de Ascens. Domini.). If it is certain that they are unable to offend God, that they are totally delivered from all the irregular movements of concupiscence, it is not unlikely that they are frequently visited by God and His angels and favored with many revelations. Can it be said that they ignore the accomplishment of the mysteries of the Incarnation and work of our salvation? Did not Elias assist at the Transfiguration of Our Lord? (Mat. 17:3; Mk. 9:3; Lk. 9:30). It is also probable that they know and are interested in what takes place in this world. Many miracles wrought through the intercession of Elias prove that they are not complete strangers to human events.

VI. Will Elias and Enoch Return? and HOW Will They Oppose Antichrist?

To deny that Elias and Enoch will return in person would be, according to Bellarmine and Suarez, if not heterodoxy, at least erroneous. Their coming is announced by the Sacred Scriptures in four different places. The prophet (Malachias 4:5) says: "I will send you Elias the prophet before the coming of the great day of the Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers." Again, in Ecclesiasticus 48:10, it is said that Elias was "predestined in the judgments of times to appease the wrath of the Lord, reconcile the heart of the father to the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob." Finally, we read in the Gospel according to St. Matthew (17:11), "Elias indeed shall come and restore all things."

Relative to the return of Enoch, the Sacred Scriptures speak only once in a formal manner. Enoch pleased God and was translated into paradise, that he may come and give repentance to the nations. (Ecclesiasticus 44:16). And although they are not nominally specified in the Apocalypse, still it is plain to be seen that they are designated as the two prophets who will be the adversaries of Antichrist. (Apoc. 11: 3-12).

Elias and Enoch will come in person and not in spirit; such is the obvious meaning of the Sacred Scriptures and the holy Fathers. For why should God wrest them from the common lot of mankind and give them such a long life if it be not His design to confide to them an extraordinary mission at the end of the world? And moreover, would it not be most useful to men whose faith begins to waver to have a clear notion of the identity of the origin of the law of nature, of the written law, and of the law of grace, especially when that knowledge is obtained from men who bear witness to the time in which they lived, to the fidelity and veracity of our God.

VII. What to Think of the Return of Moses, Jermias, and St. John the Evangelist?

Some of the Fathers, as also some theologians, have thought that Moses, Jeremias, and St. John the Evangelist will also return on the

earth before the end of the world. We shall cite some of the reasons upon which this opinion is founded.

St. Hilary (Can. 20, in Mat.), one of those who maintain that Moses will return, pretends that this prophet is not yet dead, and that since he witnessed the glory of the Saviour on Tabor in his first advent, he ought to bear witness to it also in His second coming. But these reasons are only little better than simple conjectures. Is it not said in Deuteronomy that Moses died and that the children of Israel bewailed his death for thirty days? (Deut. 34:5-8).

Some ecclesiastical authors believed that Jeremias was reserved to prophesy to the Gentiles (Jer 25:30), which he has not as yet done and because the Scripture does not speak of his death. But it may be said that he prophesied among the Gentiles in preaching to the children of Israel dispersed among the Babylonians and the people of Egypt. The fact of the Scripture saying nothing of his death does not prove that he is still living. Moreover, we are informed by tradition that he was stoned to death in Egypt and that his tomb was held in great veneration by the people of that country. [Epiphon. lib. de Prophet, vit.; Isidor. lib. de vita et morte Sanctor; Dorithen, in Synopsi.)

There are good reasons in favor of the opinion that st. John the Evangelist will return. They are as follows: Our Lord, in speaking to st. Peter, said of the beloved disciple: "Lo [IF] I will have him to remain till I come, what is it to thee?" (Jn. 21:22). While He says of the sons of Zebedee that they shall die martyrs. You shall drink of my chalice. (Mat. 20:23). It is certain that st. John was not martyred. The prophecy not being yet fulfilled, there is reason to believe that he has been reserved to fall at the hands of Antichrist; there appears to be no other motive for the delay of his martyrdom. In the Apocalypse (10:11), an angel says to st. John: "Thou must prophesy again to many nations and peoples and kings." This prediction is not yet realized and most probably will not till near the end of the world. To this may be added the fact that we have no relics of the holy Apostle and that singular things are said of his disappearance. He is said to have shut himself up in a tomb and then ordered those present to retire; when his disciples returned on the following day, they could find no trace of him, and since that time he has never been heard from. These facts show that st. John rather disappeared than died. This opinion is, moreover, sustained by concomitant reasons. Since in those latter times men will have the advantage of seeing and hearing two men as witnesses of the natural and the written law, why not someone to bear witness to the law of grace also? And who could do this better than st. John? He lived in the most intimate familiarity with Our Divine Lord and consequently is well calculated to bear Him witness and disclose the artifices of Antichrist since he foretold for centuries beforehand about the "man of sin." For these reasons st. Hippolytus (de Cons. Mundi.), St. Ambrose (in Luc. 7), Simeon Metaphraste (in Vita Joan), with others sustain this opinion.

However, it must be admitted that the contrary opinion is the more probable.

Eusebius (Lib. 3. Hist. C. 31), St. Jerome (Hieron. Lib. de Scriptura, Eccles. et contra Jovin.), Tertullian (Lib. de Anim. 20), St. Augustine (Serm. 549, de Tempore), St. Isidore (Lib. de Vita et Obitu Sand.), [and] St. Epiphanius (Haeres, 78), maintain that St. John is dead, as well as the other Apostles. In the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (2 C. 14), Pope St. Celestine and St. John Chrysostom speak of the relics of his body, and the fact that these relics not existing NOW must be attributed to the evil days of the past.

The text of the Gospel on which the return of St. John is based may be otherwise interpreted. Thus it is susceptible of the following signification: "I desire that he may remain as he is until I return and destroy Jerusalem." This is the interpretation given by Theophylacte.

Those words of Our Lord are also susceptible of a conditional signification similar to this: "And even when I would desire that this disciple should remain in the world until I return to judge it, what is it to you?" This is the explanation given by St. Chrysostom and St. Cyril. Finally, it is not possible that Our Saviour meant by this that St. John should live on without dying until His second coming when He should visit him. Nevertheless, such is the opinion of St. Augustine, Venerable Bede, and St. Thomas. The prophecy relative to the martyrdom of the Apostle was fulfilled the day on which he was cast into the caldron of boiling oil in Rome. He came out of it full of life and vigor, it is true, but that was due to a great miracle. He withstood a torture capable in itself to cause death, which in the eyes of the Church and before God suffices to merit the palm of martyrdom. Hence it is that the Church in her liturgy gives him this glorious title. As to the other prophecy, it has certainly been realized during the life of St. John. After having written his Apocalypse, he preached the Gospel again in Asia Minor. Finally, to refute the plausibility of the alleged reasons, we can say that the witnesses of the Law of Grace are so numerous and their testimony so certain and so striking, since they sealed it with their blood, that it does not appear necessary nor even useful to revoke any other proofs. And in any case, may we not cite Elias as an eye-witness of the Law of Grace since he saw the Transfiguration of the Saviour.

It is, then, more than probable, as we are led to suppose from the Apocalypse, that God has reserved only two men of the world to defend and console the Church during her last persecution.

VIII. Mission of Elias and Enoch

In the Church's infancy, St. Peter and St. Paul received, individually, a special mission, though not exclusively so; St. Peter was destined to evangelize the Jews, and St. Paul became the Apostle of the Gentiles. (Gal. 1:16). In the latter times, two new Apostles will divide between them the work of evangelizing the world. Enoch will preach to the Gentiles, whose faith and charity he will stir up and revive (Ecclesiasticus 44:16), while Elias, Jew by birth, will be charged with the conversion of the Jews. (Ecclesiasticus 48:10).

IX. Conversion of the Jews

We here meet with the difficult task of reconciling two prophecies which are apparently in contradiction: Antichrist will be received by the Jews; Elias will convert the Jews.

Still it becomes an easy task by making use of a distinction furnished by the Sacred Scriptures. "And at that time shall thy people be saved, every one that shall be found written in the book" of life. (Dan. 12:1). "And all that dwelled upon the earth adored him, whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb." (Apoc. 13:8). According to these texts, a portion of the Jews will remain obstinate and will adhere to Antichrist, but the greater part will hear the voice of Elias and will be converted. This final conversion of the Jews is spoken of in various places of the Bible. The prophet Osee speaks of it (3:4-5): "For the children of Israel shall sit many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without altar, and without ephod, and without theraphim; and after this the children of Israel will return and shall seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the last days." Moses expresses the same prediction. "After all the things aforesaid shall find thee, in the latter thou shalt return to the Lord thy God and shalt hear his voice." (Deut. 4:30). St. Paul speaks in similar terms: "Hath God cast away his people?" (Rom. 11:1). And again he adds: "That blindness in part hath happened in Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles should come in, and so all Israel should be saved, as it is written." (Rom. 11:25-26). In light of language so clear and formal of the sacred text, St. Augustine and St. Gregory do not hesitate to affirm that this conversion of the Jews is a truth of divine faith. (Aug. 20 de Civitate, C. 39; Greg. in prim. Lib. Reg. C 2 et 20, Moral. C. 23, Super. Cant. C 6).

X. Miracles and Combats of the Two Patriarchs

In order to discharge the duties of their mission with greater efficiency, the two patriarchs will be invested with the power of the Most High God.

St. John, speaking of them in the Apocalypse (11:3-6), says: "I will give my power unto my two witnesses; and they will prophesy . . . clothed in sack-cloth. These are the two olive trees and two candlesticks that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire will come out of their mouths and shall devour their enemies, and if any man will hurt them, in this manner must he be slain. These have the power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with plagues as often as they will."

In virtue of this power they will be able to console the Church and diminish the evils with which she will be afflicted in those days of sorrow and desolation.

St. Peter and St. Paul were not deterred from announcing the Gospel to pagan Rome, the mistress of idolatry. In those latter times the two prophets will also come and attack with intrepidity the enemy of Christ. They will attack him at Jerusalem, the center of his empire. This as-

sertion seems to be founded on the Apocalypse, (11:8), "And their bodies shall lie in the street." By this passage they are represented as dying in the city of Jerusalem.

XI. Duration of Their Preaching

The mission of Elias and Enoch will last for 1260 days; that is to say, three years, five months, and fifteen days; in other words, about three years and a half, which is about the length of Antichrist's reign. (Apoc. 11:3). Antichrist and these two patriarchs will very probably appear simultaneously. The Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the Fathers all concur in corroborating this opinion.

XII. Their Martyrdom

Having fulfilled their mission, the beast will prevail over them. The career of these holy apostles will be similar to that of Our Divine Saviour, who during three years was inviolable: His enemies dispatched soldiers to take Him prisoner (Jn. 7:32); they endeavored to stone Him to death (Jn. 10:31); and they brought Him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built that they might cast Him down headlong. (Lk. 4:29). But their courage failed them, and "He passing through their midst went His way." (Lk. 4:30). But there came a time when He suffered Himself to fall into their hands. "Your hour and that of the powers of darkness has arrived." (Lk. 22:53).

Elias and Enoch will be invulnerable during 1260 days. Then God will suffer them to fall into the hands of Antichrist that they may win the crown of martyrdom - their time for working miracles having ceased - while the man of sin will still perform more striking wonders. And [when] they shall have given their testimony, "The beast that ascendeth out of the abyss shall make war against them, and shall overcome them and kill them." (Apoc. 11:7). A pious legend has it that they will be crucified like Our Divine Saviour. Their holy bodies shall lie in the great city where their Master has been crucified. This city is called mystically Sodom and Gomorrah. A great number of people of every tribe and nation will see the bodies of these martyrs during three days and a half. At this sight the people will rejoice and make merry and shall send each other presents because these two prophets are dead who tormented them that dwelt upon the earth. (Apoc. 11:8-10).

XIII. Apogee of Antichrist's Power

Antichrist will boast and glory in his victory. He will open his mouth in blasphemy against God, cursing His holy name, the tabernacle, and the saints of heaven. (Apoc. 13:6). No reverses shall impede his action. (Dan. 8:12). His glory will surpass that of all other divinities (2 The. 2:4), and his language shall be that of a boaster. (Dan. 11:36). The universal acclamations which he will receive on all sides will flatter his pride; all will exclaim, "Who is like unto the beast, who can withstand him?" (Apoc. 13:4). Finally, prosperity shall attend all his movements up to the time when the vengeance of God shall overtake him. (Dan. 11:36).

ARTICLE I—DIVINE REACTION AGAINST ANTICHRIST AND HIS PARTISANS

1. Resurrection of Elias and Enoch

Three days after their death, the glorious martyrs will rise triumphant from the dead to the great wonder and consternation of their enemies. Those who rejoiced on seeing their mangled bodies lying in the street will be terror-stricken on beholding them walking again as other living beings. "And after three days and a half, the spirit of life from God entered into them. And they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them that saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying to them come up hither. And they went up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies saw them. And at that hour there was made a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were slain in the earthquake names of men seven thousand; and the rest were cast into a fear, and gave glory to the God of heaven." (Apoc. 11:11-13).

What are we to think of those events recorded in the Sacred Scriptures? Is the narration an allegory, or is it historic? The most of the holy Fathers and Doctors, and notably St. Hippolytus of Antioch, Tertullian (*lib. de Anima*), St. Ambrose (*in Ps. 45*), St. Gregory (14 *Moral.*, C. 11), Richard of St. Victor, and St. Thomas (*in 11 Apoc.*) are of opinion that St. John narrates here a[n] historical fact.

One of the principal rules by which we must interpret the Sacred Scriptures is to always take the obvious and literal sense of the words unless that there is a sufficient reason for doing otherwise. And in the text cited above there is no reason why we should deviate from the literal sense to accept an allegorical meaning. On the contrary, this anticipated glorification of Elias and Enoch is in perfect harmony with the justice and goodness of God. Nothing could conduce more to reanimate the courage of the faithful who were disheartened by the death of their leaders, while it was well calculated to induce Antichrist to attempt an extravagant enterprise that would result in his destruction.

2. End of Antichrist; Destruction of his Empire

According to the hypothesis (which seems to be certain) that the man of sin will appear simultaneously on the scene with Elias and Enoch, Antichrist will survive them only thirty days, which gives Tertullian occasion to say that the impious will perish by the blood of Elias and Enoch, (*lib. de Anima*).

In order to destroy the good effect which the ascension of the two martyrs produced in the hearts of men, Antichrist will proclaim to the world his design of ascending to heaven. With a view to the carrying out of this project, he will pitch his tent on Mount Apadno, situated between the Caspian and the Persian Sea[s], where, according to some writers, Antiochus Epiphanes, figure of Antichrist, perished and from which, according to others, Christ ascended into heaven, it being then

called Mount Olivet. (Dan. 11:45). St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, and St. Thomas say that he will ascend from the top of this mountain into the air, as did Simon Magus at Rome. But God shall overwhelm him by the splendor of His glory and shall precipitate him to the earth by a simple puff of his breath. (2 The^s. 2:8).

And when he shall fall, the earth will open and swallow up the beast and false prophet amidst flames of fire and sulphurous smoke, while his emissaries shall perish by the sword of him seated on the white horse. (Apoc. 19:11-21).

Thus shall vanish like smoke the power and glory of Antichrist, to whom we may very appropriately apply these words of Holy Writ: "I have seen the wicked highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Lebanon, and I passed by, and lo he was not; and I sought him and his place was not found." (Ps. 36:35-36).

ARTICLE II—DIVINE REACTION AGAINST THE WORLD WHICH DESIRED AND MERITED THE GOVERNMENT OF ANTICHRIST

1. Interval between the Death of Antichrist and the End of the World

The end of the world will take place almost immediately after the death of Antichrist. An interval of forty [-five] days, however, will be granted, in order to give many a chance to do penance. This assertion is very probably founded on the following words of Daniel the prophet: "Happy those who wait on the Lord and full of hope in his promises thus await him 1335 days." (12:12). According to the Fathers there is question here of those who await the second coming of Our Saviour during the last persecution, which will last 1290 days, (Dan. 12:11), leaving a remainder of forty-five days before His arrival. (Hieron. in Dan., etc.).*

It is probably during this interval that the accomplishment of the prophecy of St. Paul shall be realized in the conversion of the Jews who were followers of Antichrist. ("All Israel shall be saved.") There are many commentators especially among those of recent date who hold an opinion diametrically opposed to ours. According to them, the Church should represent the different phases of the life of Our Blessed Lord. And in studying the history of the Church, they presume to have found the following analogy. They say that the first 300 years of the persecution of the Church is an image of the persecution of Jesus during His childhood. During the interval between the fourth and sixteenth centuries, she was comparatively at peace - figure of the Saviour's life at

*Dr. Franz Spirago, in his *Details Concerning The Antichrist* (Prague, 1922) disagrees with this position, arguing that "no man knows the day or hour." If the second coming of Christ were to be forty-five days after the demise of Antichrist, then anyone familiar with this belief would know the day, at least.

Nazareth. From that period the Church had to contend with many and serious obstacles on the part of various governments; still, she constantly preached the Gospel and evangelized the poor - figure of the public life of Our Lord. Finally, the hour of darkness is approaching; the passion of the Church will commence with the advent of Antichrist. But soon again the Church, spouse of Jesus Christ, shall rise from her chains more resplendent and glorious than ever - figure of the days passed by Our Saviour with His Apostles after His resurrection, before His ascension into heaven. During those days of universal regeneration, the Church, according to some, shall be governed by Pontiffs risen from the dead. The "Angelic Pastor" of the prophecy of [St.] Malachy [1095-1148, Irish Bishop of Connor], will commence the glorious series.

All this reasoning is very fine and quite plausible. But withal, we must confess that it is nothing more than a fine hypothesis which seems to be in contradiction with the words of Our Saviour representing the wicked as having been taken by surprise by the final destruction of all things, which shall be in punishment of the unheard of crimes committed during the time of Antichrist.

Hence, notwithstanding the opportunity given to do penance (Thom, in Apoc. Acosta, lib. 3), the greater part will continue to lead disorderly lives, just like those who lived in the time of Noe. (Mat. 24: 38; Lk. 17:27). They shall continue to indulge in all kinds of excesses of intemperance and luxury until they will be surprised by the deluge of fire that will envelope and devour them. (2 Pet. 3:7-12; Apoc. 22:11). But the faithful friends of Jesus will patiently await His coming. They will say with the beloved Apostle, "Come, Lord Jesus." (Apoc. 22:20).

It is probable that our resurrection will take place on Easter Sunday; such is the opinion of Lactance (lib. 7, C. 19) and of St. Anselm (Elucid.). If there will be an interval of forty-five days between the death of Antichrist and our resurrection, the death of Antichrist must take place during the days of debauchery which precede the holy time of Lent.

2. Signs that Will Appear in Inanimate Things and Which are Forerunners of the End of the World

The events which we shall now briefly set forth disclose the tragic end of the great drama of humanity, the destruction of the city of wickedness, whose principal representative on earth will be Antichrist [and] the definite and eternal triumph of the City of God, of which Jesus Christ is King.

As St. Augustine remarks (lib. 20, de Civit., C. 30), the events pertaining to the end of the world will happen in the manner they have been foretold, but as to their accidental circumstances, God alone knows the order in which they will take place. He has revealed nothing explicitly on this point, and consequently, our knowledge of them is confined to mere conjecture, possessing a greater or less degree of probability. Experience alone will put us in possession of the desired information.

The general run of events will most probably occur in the following order: First, great signs and wonders in the heavens and upon earth

shall precede the coming of Jesus Christ. Second, the resurrection of the dead. Third, the General Judgment. Fourth, the renewal of heaven and earth. Many signs that are forerunners of the end of the world have already appeared; others shall follow, such as the Gospel preached to all nations, the reign of Antichrist, the conversion of the Jews - partially accomplished by Elias and finally completed by the death of Antichrist. But other revelations are expected before the end comes.

The evil genius will, to all appearance, hold in check the power of Christ for a long time. But the hour of Divine justice and retribution shall come. An angel will appear in the heavens and swear by Him that liveth forever and ever that time shall be no more.* (Apoc. 10:6). The Lord, like a warrior, "will put on justice as a breastplate" and "will take equity for an invincible shield." (Wis. 5:19-20). He advances at the head of His army, "for His armies are exceeding great; His warriors are strong, and execute His word; for the day of the Lord is great, and very terrible, and who can stand it?" (Joel 2:11). "And he will arm the creature for the revenge of His enemies." (Wis. 5:18).

The beautiful order that NOW governs the whole universe shall give place to wild confusion. "The sun shall be darkened, and the MOON shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved." (Mat. 24:29).** On the day of the Lord, "the heavens shall pass with great violence, and the elements shall be melted

*The reader might note two words in this sentence, "angel" and "time". The Confraternity version of the New Testament translates "time" as "delay" in the sense of "that there shall be delay no longer" in the unfolding of the events of the last days. The term "angel" appears many times in the Apocalypse; Rev. Herman (Bernard F. Leonard) Kramer in his illuminating *The Book of Destiny* (Buechler Pub. Co., 1955) interprets these "angels" usually to be saints of the Holy Catholic Church who have special and striking apostolates. Others, by way of passing, have opined that the angel of Apocalypse 10 is none other than the much-prophesied "Great Monarch." (cf. *Prophecy for Today*, by Edward Connor, Apostolate of Christian Action, 1963, for the best treatment concerning this personage.)

**Kramer (Op. cit.) quite convincingly analyzes the mystical signification of such symbolic language in the Bible. He holds that the "sun" represents the Catholic Church, the temporal vehicle of God's supernatural light; the "moon" symbolizes lawful civil government, which has its light by reflection from the sun; "stars" represent the bishops of the Church; and the "earth" connotes the kingdom of Satan. Thus, stars falling upon the earth would mean the apostasy of bishops (to error, which is of Satan, the Father of Lies and Prince of the World). And diminution of the sun and moon would mean the Church would lose her influence over mankind generally, but over civil governments especially; these latter would probably be dominated by agents of Antichrist and therefore not reflect the light of truth. On the other hand, the entire passage undoubtedly is also quite literally true. A nuclear holocaust could cloud our atmosphere so thoroughly as to block out the light of the moon and darken that of the sun; meanwhile, the earth could pass through a field of planetoids (such as Icarus, which passed 4 million miles from the earth on June 14, 1968) or asteroids and experience a shower of huge, blazing meteorites that could do untold damage, causing earthquakes and convulsions in the earth's crust. Our Lord no doubt used the word "stars" for simplicity's sake, but a knowledge of modern astronomy shows how impossible it would be for the earth to be hit by "suns", which we now understand the stars to be. Students of the Bible know it is a subtle book and will not be surprised it can, in the manner described in this footnote, indicate two different sets of events by the same passage.

with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it shall be burned up." (2 Pet. 3:10). "The heavens departed as a book folded up." (Apoc. 6:14). These passages, according to St. Augustine and all the other Fathers and theologians, must not be taken in their mystical sense, but in their literal meaning. (St. Augustine, 18 de Civit. D., C. 23). The Sibyl foretold those terrible phenomena in the following verses:

Eripitur solis jubar et chorus interit ostris;
Solvitur collum lunaris splendor obibit.*

On earth all the elements shall be thrown into confusion. The air will be rent by lightnings and voices and thunders and earthquakes such as never had been since men were upon the earth, will then be known, [sic] (Apoc. 16:18). "Then shafts of lightning shall go directly from the clouds. As from a bow well bent, they shall be shot out, and shall fly to the mark," the wicked. (Wis. 5:22). "The waters of the sea shall rage against them, and the rivers shall run together in a terrible manner," and swallow up the impious. (Wis. 5:23). I will trouble the heavens, and I will move the earth out of its place, saith the Lord. (Is. 13:13). "His lightnings have shown forth to the world; the earth saw and trembled; the mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord." (Ps. 96:4-5).

These last effects shall be produced by the most active agent of destruction, namely, fire.

It is of faith that the world shall perish by fire. The world, says St. Peter (2 Pet. 3:6 & 10), has been drowned by the deluge; the heavens and the earth which actually exist are reserved for the destructive action of fire; the earth and all the works of man shall be burned. The heavens shall be enveloped in and consumed by flames. We may add that which has been the constant belief of the pagan world of ancient times.

The Sibyl of Erythrae [ancient Ionian (Greek) city of Asia Minor claiming to be the home of the Sibyl Herophile] announces the final destruction of the universe in the following verse:

Decidit e caelis ignisque et sulfuris omnis.**

We may here adduce the opinion of geologists who maintain that the earth can be destroyed by fire. Among others we remark the name of a distinguished scientist, Baudant, who (332 of his Geology, expresses himself in the following terms: "As to what shall be the future state of our planet, everything conduces to lead us to believe that its present tranquil state is only temporary. We have no assurance that the calm period enjoyed during 5158 years will not one day be interrupted by the appearance of some new mountainous system, some new dislocation of the earth's surface. This is evident from the earthquakes that are of frequent occurrence." Hence, we may conclude that the religious idea of the earth's destruction by fire, while being founded on Revelation, is at the same time borne out by the laws that govern the earth itself.

*Literally, "The brightness of the sun was taken away, and the host of stars perished; the (neck of the) MOON WAS crushed, and its luster died."

**Literally, "Fire and sulfur will rain from the skies upon the entire earth."

It appears to be certain that fire will precede the coming of the Sovereign Judge. "A fire shall go before him, and shall burn his enemies round about." (Ps. 96:3).

It is apropos to say a word about the origin, nature, and effects of the fire that will consume the world.

Like the waters of the deluge, this fire will probably fall from heaven and proceed from the interior of the earth at the same time. It will be kindled by the divine Power, through the ministry of angels. And while of a material nature like our own, its heat will be much more intense, and its effects will be most prodigious, for it will purify, punish, and re-new the world at the same time.

It will purify the earth of all mankind. The earth is like a vast temple soiled by all sorts of iniquities. Moreover, there is in the present actual nature a law, in virtue of which, living beings are subject to the action of deleterious principles. This law of compatibility will, from all appearances, be destroyed on that day when all the material elements will be decomposed by this fire, which will, at the same time, remove from the earth all physical and moral evils and establish the difference that exists between the wicked, the imperfect, and the saints.

The wicked will be struck unawares by the vengeful flames. St. Paul, speaking of the event, says: "In a flame of fire yielding vengeance to them who know not God, and who obey not the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 The. 1:8). The imperfect will be punished, for St. Paul says [that] on the day of the Lord the fire will show forth the quality of our works. Those whose works will burn shall suffer a partial injury, but shall be saved by fire, and will in this way go through their purgatory." (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

Finally, the saints will remain intact in the midst of the devouring flames, like the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace at Babylon. "If any man's work abide, which he hath built, therefore, he shall receive a reward." (1 Cor. 3:14). Hence, this fire shall possess the property of exhibiting the virtue of men.

Hence, like the plagues that scourged the Egyptians without injury to the Hebrews, though in the same place, thus shall this fire prove terrible for some and harmless for others. It is on this occasion that these words of Our Saviour shall be verified in effect: "Of two men in the field, one shall be taken and the other shall be spared; of two women turning the mill-stone, one shall be taken and the other shall be left." (Mat. 24:40-41). Of two persons in the same bed, the fire will burn one and do no harm to the other.

From all this we are led to infer that the Sovereign Judge will find men yet alive at His arrival on earth. This is the opinion held by St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom, Theophilactae, and Theodoret, which is founded on the following passage from St. Paul: "For this we say unto you in the word of the Lord . . . that we who are alive shall be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ, into the air, and so shall we be always with the Lord." (1 The. 4:15-18).

In presence of such testimony as this, the opinion of those who

maintain that the earth must be consumed only after the General Judgment that takes place will evidently fall to the ground. Their reasons are first, that the earth can be conveniently renewed only after the resurrection; second, because it is difficult to understand how the saints risen from the dead will live in the midst of flames; third, because according to this hypothesis all men would be dead before the coming of Our Saviour, which is contrary to the words of the Apostle cited above.

But while we can find no proofs of any weight to sustain this last opinion, we find proofs from the authority of the Fathers and Holy Writ in favor of the other opinion; consequently, it must be the more probable.

ARTICLE III—CONSUMMATION OF THE GLORIES AND ETERNAL EMPIRE OF JESUS CHRIST

1. Resurrection of the Dead

It does not belong to the scope of this little book to expose the theological and philosophical reasons adduced in support of the truth of this dogma so full of consolation; hence, we must be satisfied with a[n] historical exposition of the principal circumstances in order to remain within the limits of its plan.

The first incident that figures conspicuously among these circumstances is the sounding of the last trumpet. For the last trumpet shall sound, says St. Paul. (1 Cor. 15:52). But as to whether this will be a material or allegorical sound there seems to be a difference of opinion; St. Gregory inclines to think that the sounding of the last trumpet should be taken in an allegorical sense to designate the all-powerful will of God. (17 Moral. C. 29).

That it will be a material sound appears certain to several of the Fathers and a great many theologians. (Anselm. Acost. Lib. 4, C. 17). Some of them, founding their opinion on the Scriptures, distinguish two kinds of sounds: one, of the voice of the Son of God, who will command the dead to rise—in the trumpet of God (1 Cor. 15:52 and according to St. John the Evangelist, 5:25); (two), the sound of the Angelic voice, which is generally believed to be that of St. Michael, who will assemble all mankind before the judgment seat of God. Others again try to show that the two voices are but one and the same in as much as the angelic voice is only the continuation or promulgation of the order given by Jesus Christ. However this may be, this voice or those voices will resound like thunder peals. [Joel 2:1]. This is why some authors compare them to a trumpet; yet, according to many theologians, the distinct sound of a trumpet will be heard, while others, in admitting this, maintain that we shall subsequently hear the voice of the Son of God and finally that of the Archangel. This last opinion seems to be more in harmony with the Scriptures.

The voice of Jesus Christ, like the creative Word, will possess an all powerful force, producing instantaneous effect. "In the beginning . . .

God said: 'Let there be light' and there was light." (Gen. 1:1&3). He shall say at the end, "Rise ye dead and come to judgment," (Hieron, Reg. Monach, c. 30), and immediately the resurrection will take place, or to use the words of St. Paul, "In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye." (1 Cor. 15:52).

According to the scholastic opinion, the angels will prepare the material by gathering up the mouldered ashes of the dead; God will give form to those inanimated elements by commanding the souls to animate the newly arranged bodies. (Thomas, Supplem., Q. 76, A. 3). The just will have perfect bodies, renewed in youthful bloom (Ps. 102:3-5), endowed with the most exquisite qualities.

This corporal perfection will be like the mirrored reflection of the happiness and glory of the soul submerged in the supernatural fountain of eternal life. (Contra Gentil, Quest. Q. 96, A. 3). The just will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father and like stars for all eternity. (Wis. 3; Mat. 13:43). The body is born into the world sombre and opaque; it shall rise radiant and transparent. (1 Cor. 15:53). It is born subject to corruption; it shall rise incorruptible and impassible. (1 Cor. 15:53). God shall wipe away the tears of those who shed them for His sake; the reign of death shall be at an end. Lamentations, wailings, and sufferings shall be unknown as if they had never been. The body now is dull and heavy; then it shall possess the subtlety of a spirit, unimpeded by all kinds of obstacles in its actions and movements. Finally, our bodies NOW are weak and slow in their movements; then they shall be strong and agile, enabled to pass swift as thought through the immeasurable distance of space. We shall possess the agility of angels, says St. Anselm. (Lib. de Similitudinibus, c. 51).

The bodies of the just, while they resemble the angels (Mat. 22:30), will conserve all the functional aptitude of the senses, to taste forever the joys of heaven in all that is most pure and holy. (D. Thom.). Their hearing will then be charmed by the most harmonious melodies; their sight ravished by ineffable beauties, namely, those of Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother and all the celestial choir, also by the beauties of nature which they will be enabled to contemplate throughout the whole extent of creation.

It will not be the same for the wicked. They will be immortal, but their immortality will be for them a punishment; they will be black, passible, and hideous, horrible like the demons and hell which they are in future to inhabit.

It is asked, says St. Augustine, whether those whom Jesus Christ will find still alive upon earth (and whom the Apostle personifies in himself, as also those who lived during his time) are never to die, or while being borne with those risen from the dead through the air to meet Christ, if their death and resurrection will suddenly take place.

It is not impossible that this should take place, and by admitting that it will, we have no further difficulty to explain and to reconcile that words of the Apostle when he says that we shall all die and that we shall all rise to life. (De Civit., Lib. 20, c. 20).

2. The General Judgment

All mankind without exception must appear at the General Judgment. The Sacred Scriptures are quite explicit on the matter. "We shall [all] stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (Rom. 14:10). And again, it is said in the Apocalypse (20:12), "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and they were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

The place in which the General Judgment will take place is not defined by Faith. However, that place will be truly called "Jehosaphat", which means "the Lord Judge." But that it will be that valley Jehosaphat, situated near Jerusalem, is not certain, for in whatever place The Lord Judge will judge mankind, that place will be named from His actual presence "Jehosaphat". "Let the nations come up into the valley of Jehosaphat; for there I will sit to judge all nations round about." (Joel 3:12). Again, it is said in the Acts of the Apostles (1:11), "This Jesus who is taken away from you up into heaven shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven." Some commentators argue from those texts that the valley of Jehosaphat near Jerusalem is the one designated, moreover, that having been the scene of Our Saviour's passion, death resurrection, and ascension, it should naturally bear witness to the mystery of God's justice.

Others again seem to be preoccupied with the thought that this valley will be too small to accommodate the whole human race. But we see nothing that obliges us to believe that all people must stand within the limits of its actual prescribed boundaries; hence, without doing the sacred text the least violence, we may take the valley for the center and then let the required space be limited to such boundaries as necessity may require.

When all preparations are made, then the Sovereign Judge will descend in the "clouds of heaven with much power and majesty." (Mat. 24:30). He will come in the clouds of heaven that His glory may appear to greater advantage. It is remarkable that all the illustrious divine apparitions which we read of in the Sacred Scriptures took place in the clouds; hence, the royal prophet, speaking of them relative to God, says, "Who [Thou] makest the clouds thy chariot." (Ps. 103.3).

He will come with great power. This power will be made manifest by the destruction of the universe and by the glowing splendor of His appearance in the heavens. He appears no longer under the abject form of the helpless babe at Bethlehem, but as master of the thunders. He will come surrounded by legions of angels who shall receive and administer His orders. His raiment will be white like the snow, and He will be seated on a throne like flames of fire. (Dan. 7:9; Apoc. 20:11). "His cross shall proceed Him as the standard of His royalty."

Vexilla regis prodeunt.

Fulget crucis mysterium*

*Otherwise, a more literal translation might read "As the standard of a king glitters before him, so blazes the mystery of the cross."

This interpretation is founded on the following passage according to st. Matthew (24:30), "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." The Fathers believe that this sign is the cross, and the Church chants it in her sacred liturgy. "This sign will appear in the heavens when the Saviour will come to judge the world." ("Hoc signum erit in coelo, quum Dominus ad iudicandum venerit.")

What will be the nature of this cross? st. John Chrysostom and st. Ephrem say that it will be the True Cross, miraculously formed out of all its particles, which are now scattered throughout the world.

But st. Augustine and st. Hippolytus say that this sign will be more brilliant than the sun, which has led st. Thomas and st. Antoninus to believe that it will be a luminous cross, miraculously formed in the air; this opinion seems to be the more probable one. According to Pope st. Clement, in the seven books of Constitutions the Cross will be visible for many days before the Judgment, in order to convert the followers of Antichrist, while st. Anselm (in *Elucidat.*) inclines to the most probable opinion, which makes it appear on the day of Judgment. Some authors, as Vignier, maintain, without any proof however, that the other instruments of the passion will also be exhibited on the last day. The Cross will be a pledge of joy and consolation for the just, but a subject of horror and regret for the wicked.

The Sacred Scriptures, referring in various passages to the General Judgment, make frequent mention of thrones and assistants of Our Blessed Saviour seated upon these thrones. st. John in the Apocalypse (20:11) says, "And I saw a great white throne, and One sitting upon it," namely, Jesus Christ. And the prophet Daniel, speaking relative to the same subject, says, "I beheld till thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days sat." (7:9). But for whom were these thrones prepared if not for those whom Jesus Christ will call to sit around Him on the great day of God's justice?

st. Augustine (in *Pr.* 86), st. Gregory (26 *Moral.*, C. 24), Venerable Bede (in *Serm. st. Benedicti*) are of opinion that this honor will be conferred upon such as shall have practiced evangelical perfection. To them, and to them only, did Jesus promise a seat beside Him to judge the world with Him. "Amen I say to you that you who have followed me . . . you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Mat. 19.28).

Others would extend this honor to all the saints, in proof of which they cite the following passage from the Psalmist (149:6-9): "They shall bear in their hands two-edged swords; To execute vengeance upon the nations, chastisements among the peoples. To bind their kings with fetters, and their nobles with manacles of iron. To execute upon them the judgment that is written; this glory is to all the saints."

Properly speaking, the saints will not judge, for judgment is an act of personal jurisdiction which belongs to Jesus Christ only. They will only participate in the honor reflected from the exercise of this power by the divine Judge and by their ratification of the sentence that He will pro-

nounce: "Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgments are equity." (Ps. 118:137); and by their vindication of divine Providence: "For the just that are dead condemneth the wicked that are living" (Wis. 4:16) by their co-operation with divine grace during life. Probably those who have led a perfect life upon earth will be called on to reproach the wicked for their crimes before the Sovereign Judge will pronounce their sentence.

The wicked shall be judged, some rigorously, other favorably, according to the nature of their crimes. Those who will receive the most favorable judgment are children who died without baptism and infidels; the reason is obvious and is also mentioned by the Evangelist. (Mat. 12 [esp. v. 31]). The next in order are those Christians who have been the most favored and consequently the most culpable. Finally, all those who have wielded power and authority in this world; those of this last category shall be rigorously judged, as it is specifically mentioned in the book of Wisdom (6:6-7), "For a most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule," while the humble and lowly shall receive a favorable judgment, "For to him that is little mercy is granted." "God hath stood in the congregation of gods; and being in the midst of them He judgeth gods." (Ps. 81:1). By "gods" are meant those who are invested with authority. Of all those, none have abused this authority nor committed such horrible crimes as did Antichrist; consequently, his judgment shall be the most terrible of all. "For the mighty shall be mightily tormented." (Wis. 6:7).

We shall all be judged according to our works. Each one shall render a strict account of all the good and evil that he has done in this life. (2 Cor. 5:10). "The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the breast." (1 Cor. 4:5). "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; nor hid, that shall not be known." (Mat. 10:26). The law of secrecy resorted to for the government of this world shall then be abolished. We shall see all the thoughts that have been entertained and meditated, everything that has been said and done in this world. "The books shall be opened," (Apoc. 20:12), which, according to the interpretation given by Venerable Bede, corroborated by the majority of theologians, designate the conscience of each one, which shall be unfolded to the gaze of all and in which may be read every thought, word, and deed, as from a book. St. Thomas and Richard of Saint Victor hold a different opinion, however, and pretend that the opened books mentioned in the Apocalypse are the deeds of men. As the sun by his (sic) brightness renders all objects visible, so will Jesus Christ, by His presence, disclose to the view of all men the conscience of every single person. "For God who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts." (2 Cor. 4:6).

The Master of Sentences (in 4 Sent. dist. 43) maintain[^]) that the secret but pardoned sins of the just will not be revealed on the last day, on account of the shame and confusion that would cause them. This opinion, however, is erroneous. The passages quoted above from the Sacred Scriptures are explicit on the matter so far as to leave no room for any distinction whatever. Everything shall be revealed without ex-

ception. st. Augustine (De Civita. C. 14), st. Anselm [Hieron, in C. 7 Dan.), and st. Thomas, with other theologians, unanimously admit that the conscience of the just as well as that of the reprobate shall be laid bare to the view of the whole world.

The reasons which the Master of Sentences adduces in vindication of his opinion are purile. The manifestation of the secret but pardoned sins of the just, so far from being a subject of confusion for them, will rebound to the greater glory of God and their OWN happiness since that will make known their penitential labors also. st. Paul says that all things turn to the advantage of the just: "We know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good." (Rom. 8:28).

For eighteen hundred years the Church has never ceased to publish the sins of Mary Magdalen, Peter's denial of Our Saviour, the incredulity of Thomas, Saul's persecution of the Christians. st. Augustine publicly defamed himself in his Confessions. Has it diminished in the least their glory and happiness in heaven? Moreover, on that day we shall be able to judge things rightly, as we shall consider them from a just point of view. We will judge things like God Himself: We will praise whom He praises, (1 Cor. 4:5), and we will condemn whom He condemns. "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right." (Ps. 118:137). Then for the first time shall we comprehend the mystery of "predestination", which is the mystery of divine Providence. (Bede in Apoc. 20).

While all that we have ever done will be strictly discussed at the Last Judgment, nevertheless, Jesus Christ has given us to understand that a special mention will be made of all our works of mercy [Eccl 12:4[sic]J because charity was His great commandment and the distinctive mark of His disciples. (Jn 13:35). The examination being finished, Jesus will pronounce the eternal sentence in a voice that will re-echo throughout the vault of heaven. He will say to the wicked, "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire," and to the just, "Come ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you." The wicked shall go into everlasting pains, and the just into everlasting life. (Mat. 25:34, 41, 46).

3. Renewal of Heaven and Earth

The renewal of heaven and earth will take place immediately after the General Judgment.

It is of Faith that this world will be succeeded by a new heaven and a new earth; this belief is founded on the following passages of Holy Writ: "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth." (Is. 65:17); "I saw a new heaven and a new earth." (Apoc. 21:1).

Will there be simply a modification only of the heavens and the earth, or will there be a new creation? On this point there is a difference of opinion. Some believe that the actual world shall be annihilated and replaced by a new one which God will create out of nothing. (Hilar, in Ps. 118; Chrysot., Horn. 14 in Rom.; Ambros., Cathar. Comm, in Heb. r. j. This opinion is founded on the following passages of Holy Writ, "Heaven and earth shall pass away." (Mat. 24:35). st. John uses the same expression as Our Saviour when he says, "For the first heaven and the first earth

was gone, and the sea was now no more." (Apoc. 21: 1), Heaven and earth shall perish, says the Psalmist (101:26-27); Ecclesiasticus exclaims: "What is brighter than the sun? Still it will be eclipsed." (17:30). Finally, the expression of Isaias, "Behold I create," seems to indicate a substantial renovation.

Others, as St. Jerome (in Is. 61), St. Augustine (in Ps. 101), St. Thomas (in 4 distinct, 47 et 48, etc.), are of opinion that the world will not be substantially destroyed, but that it will undergo an accidental modification. This opinion is certain and is in perfect harmony with the Sacred Scriptures and the analogy of faith. The Scriptures often employ the word "new" not to indicate a different object, but to indicate the same object with some accidental modifications. Thus it exhorts us to put on the "new man", which means that we should be united to Jesus Christ by grace, that we should supernaturalize our being, while it is certain that the transfiguration operated by grace makes no substantial change in man, being only a noble and glorious accident that adorns his nature.

Moreover, the Scriptures bear out philosophy in its assertion that God annihilates nothing of what He has created. "I know," says Ecclesiastes (3:14), "that all what God has created will last forever."

We can reasonably admit the absolute possibility of annihilating the world, but we fail to discover any motives for which the divine Wisdom would do it. St. Epiphanius says the Scriptures often employ the word "perish" to indicate a simple modification of a thing.

Hence, it follows that what will perish, what will pass away, what will disappear, is not the substance, but the figure, that is to say, the exterior phenomenon or the actual aspect of the world. The same elements will remain with the essential properties, but the positive and accidental laws of nature will be changed and adjusted to a state of humanity. For since all things were made for man (1 Cor. 3:22), when his condition changes, the world must also, to correspond or agree with his condition. God will not only modify the laws of nature but He will also, by a positive act of His omnipotent power, associate new and better properties with the elements. Such is the import of the word "create" in the passage from Isaias (65:17), "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth."

What will be the nature of this renovation of the world? The frequent and varying changes which take place in the universe not being consistent with the immutable condition of the blessed, theologians say that the world shall then be in an immutable state and that the present succession of forces in the transmutation of matter will no longer exist. In order to explain this phenomenon, the scholastics suppose that the movement of the heavens will cease because, according to their system, this movement is the first cause of all physical or material alterations. This explanation is founded upon a basis too problematic to be received or entertained. There is no doubt that a great change will be effected in the laws which at present govern the heavenly bodies, since the "stars shall fall from heaven;" the sun and moon shall present new phenomena. But does this mean that the movement of the heavenly bodies

shall cease to exist? This is still a problem to be solved. It must, however, be admitted that the following passage from Isaias (60:20), "Thy sun shall go down no more, and thy moon shall not decrease," furnish the scholastics with a plausible proof for their opinion.* Again, St. John says in the Apocalypse (10:6) "that time shall be no longer."** And time being the succession of material movements, it is the movement of superior bodies that must regulate that of inferior bodies. Hence the heavenly bodies must cease to move. This conclusion could not be gained if the premises were certain. But the words of the Apocalypse can be explained in another way, by which the scholastic theory would fall to the ground.

According to this opinion [our emphasis], the heavenly bodies will not alone be immovable, but also the earth, which will participate in the glorious immutability of the elect. The animals and plants subject to material changes will disappear, and the earth in its renewed state will henceforward be the abode of Jesus Christ, the angels, and the elect. (Contra Gentiles, Lib. 4, C. ult.) This opinion, though held by the majority of the scholastics, and on that account worthy of the greatest respect, seems, however, open to serious objections from a scriptural, traditional, and philosophical point of view. The Scriptures positively say that all the works of God shall last for ever. (Ecclesiastes 3:14). St. Paul says that "every creature groaneth and travaileth in pain . . ." waiting for their redemption. (Rom. 8:22). Now we must remember that the plants and animals form a part of God's works, and they are creatures; and if they must cease to exist, how then shall the words of the sacred text be verified? To the above texts may be added also those of the royal Psalmist, "Sing joyfully to God all the earth . . . Let the sea be moved and the fullness thereof; the world and all that dwell therein. The rivers shall clap their hands, the mountains shall rejoice together at the presence of the Lord, because he cometh to judge the earth." (Ps. 97:4-9). Some of the Fathers and some theologians explicitly state that the vegetable kingdom will have a place in the new world. St. Anselm states in his *Elucidations* that the earth, which contained the body of Our Saviour, will resemble Paradise, and because it was sprinkled with the blood of martyrs, it shall perpetually produce fragrant flowers, with roses and violets that shall never wither. William of Paris (apud Carthus. in 4 d. 48) speaks in similar terms, stating that the Fathers, the most renowned for their profound erudition, hold that the earth shall be forever clothed with verdure and charming flowers which shall never fade. It is true there is no question in these texts of animals, but if we admit the existence of the vegetable kingdom, analogy would lead us to

*The reader will recall our footnote on page 37 interpreting the "sun" and "moon" to represent the Catholic Church and legal civil governments respectively. Thus, the light of supernatural Truth from the Church will shine uninterrupted by persecution and/or absence of zeal, and the civil governments will rule in righteousness and justice, with the light of Truth as their guide, nor will there occur revolutions and coups d'etat to worry the people.

**The reader will recall that the Confraternity version translates this passage "that there shall be delay no longer," thus changing the meaning.

believe in the existence of the other.

Finally, the harmony of the visible world and the pleasure of the senses seems to require the existence of the animal kingdom as creatures to which God may impart the quality of incorruptibility, to correspond with the state of the children of God. This last explanation is well calculated to reconcile the two opinions.

Not only will the laws of nature be modified, but the very elements will be endowed with admirable properties to increase the felicity of the elect, delighting the senses in their noblest instincts. The touch and taste either will cease to be channels of delight, or they will be estranged to all sordid pleasure. The sweetest melodies shall charm the hearing, while objects of ravishing beauty shall delight the sight. The Scriptures often speak of celestial concerts, and there is no reason why these words may not be literally interpreted.

It often makes mention of the brilliant light that we will see in the mansions of eternal glory when all the filth of the world will be cast into hell. The fire will employ those properties that are painful to torment the wicked and its light for the happiness of the blessed. The interior of the earth, where will be probably the abode of the damned, will be the scene of devouring flames and impenetrable darkness. But exteriorly every material element will possess in itself the property of light, thus illuminating itself and shedding at the same time its beneficent rays on surrounding objects. The light of the moon will be equal to that of the sun, and the brightness of the sun will be seven times more brilliant. (Is. 30:26).* There shall be no opaque bodies found on the earth's surface; the earth itself shall be transparent like glass. (Apoc. 21:21). Of all the visible objects the earth will, however, present the most ungainly appearance since all objects will receive an illumination equal to their own transparency. (D. Thomas. 4 Disk, 48, Q 2, A. 4). Hence, this new terrestrial Jerusalem, built up by the hand of God, will no longer need the sun to give it light. (Apoc. 21:23). The Lamb is its luminous torch, and the innumerable multitudes of the elect walk in His light.

Thus shall the mystery of God be consummated; order is established; the wicked are punished; the just are rewarded; Jesus Christ reigns over the visible world forever and ever.

O JESUS, MAY THY KINGDOM COME!

*Relative to our suggestion that the sun represents the Catholic Church and the moon civil governments, this passage could indicate extremely felicitous civil order because laws are passed which agree with God's natural law and with His revealed truth (moon becomes like the sun), plus an extraordinary flowering of the Church because evil is removed from the world and great new insights are gained into Sacred Scripture and the divine mysteries.

CONCLUSION

1. When Shall Antichrist Come?

The Holy Scriptures do not specify the exact time when Antichrist shall come; all that they say is that he will not come before the Gospel has been preached throughout the whole world, that the Roman empire shall have passed away.

I. The Gospel Preached Throughout the World.

It is of Faith that the Gospel shall be preached to all nations before the end of the world, that it may bear testimony against the wicked. (Mat. 24:14; Mk. 13:10). But will that take place before the coming of Antichrist? It is, if not impossible, at least extremely difficult to see how it should be otherwise. According to St. John (in Apoc. 14), the reign of the man of sin will be the second last scourge of the world. He will abolish public worship, and the Church, instead of being consoled by the efforts of her children to achieve new conquests, will see with poignant grief many of them abandon her to follow her declared enemy and persecutor. The diffusion of the Gospel will therefore be universal before Antichrist will appear on the scene.

It is true that from the very birth of Christianity the Apostles preached the Gospel to all the nations then living upon earth. (Ps. 18:5). But when Our Lord spoke, He had in view not only the preaching of, but also the diffusion of the Gospel and its acceptance by all nations. The royal prophet (Ps. 21:28) says, "All the people of the earth shall remember and shall be converted to the Lord; and all the kindreds of the gentiles shall adore in his sight." St. Prosper (de liber arbit, ad Rufinum), challenges anyone to point out a single nation in which the standard of the cross will not have been planted and received. He finds the truth of his assertion on the following passage of Holy Writ: Did not God the Father say to His Son: Ask Me and I will give Thee the nations of the earth for Thy inheritance, and Thy possessions shall be limited only by the extremities of the earth? St. John in the Apocalypse (7:9) says, "I saw a great multitude, which no man could count, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands."

That the Gospel must be preached and received everywhere does not imply any more than what can be morally done, since the doctrine of the Church will be morally opposed till the end of time. But when will the Gospel be sufficiently diffused? When will it have borne sufficient fruits in the designs of God to require no further delay to the second coming of Christ? These are questions which cannot be answered at present. This knowledge is the secret of that divine wisdom which alone has built the tower of heaven, penetrated the depths of the abyss, walked on the waves of the sea, and traversed the extremities of the universe. (Ecclesiasticus 24:8).

II. The Roman Empire

The complete destruction of the Roman Empire is also an event that must happen prior to the coming of Antichrist, but it remains to be ex-

amined what is meant by the Roman Empire and what is the authority upon which the assertion of its destruction is founded. Commentators of the Bible contend that this empire is explicitly pointed out and described by the prophet Daniel under the form of a statue, the head of which is gold, and represents the Persian empire; the body and thighs are of brass and represent the Grecian empire; the legs being of iron, the feet partly iron and partly clay, represent the Roman empire. (Dan. 2:32, etc.).

The feet of this statue had ten toes, which represent the ten kings who will divide the kingdom among them. The same prophet also saw four kingdoms under the form of four beasts (Dan. 7), the latter of which had ten horns, which were broken and divided among the despoilers.

According to some commentators, when Rome relapses into idolatry, it shall be destroyed and burned by those ten kings by order of Antichrist. (Cornelius a Lap. in Apoc.). St. John gives a description of a beast with seven heads and ten horns. On this beast is seated a woman, who represents the city seated on its seven hills, which in turn are represented by the seven beasts. (Apoc. 17:1,3,9). The ten horns are ten kings, enemies of Rome, who will pillage and destroy it. (Dan. 7:8, etc.; Apoc. 17:12 & 16). Such is the manner in which the Fathers have always interpreted the foregoing prophecies.

In his second epistle to the Thessalonians, St. Paul, wishing to disabuse them of a false notion they had relative to the immediate coming of Our Saviour, says to them (2 The. 2:2-3 & 6-7): "Let no man deceive you by any means; for unless there come a revolt* first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, the day of the Lord is not yet at hand. . . . And now you know what withholdeth, that he may be revealed in his time, for the mystery of iniquity already worketh; only that he who now holdeth, do hold, until he be taken out of the way, and then that wicked one shall be revealed." This text, obscure in itself, has been interpreted in the same manner by St. Ambrose (in 2 Ep. ad Galat.), by St. Jerome (quaest. 2 ad Alagarium), by St. Chrysostom (horn. 4 in hanc epist.), by Hippolytus (de Anti-christo), by St. Ireneus (Jib. haeres, C. 25 et 26). All the Fathers hold as apostolic tradition that St. Paul wished to designate the Roman empire in the above passage and which they explain as follows: Let the hands which hold at present the reins of the empire hold them until it is completely destroyed. The Apostle did not wish to express himself more clearly than he did, as he did not wish to wound the Roman pride. At Rome the city was believed to be eternal, and it was deemed blasphemous to deny it - a crime that merited the severest punishment. Hence it was that the surest means of securing the Christians' condemnation was to accuse them of being enemies of the Roman empire. The first apologists of Christianity labored assiduously to refute this calumny and remove the public prejudice which it created against the Christians. Tertullian (in Apologet, C. 32) says that the Christians pray for the preservation of the Empire, the

*The Confraternity version translates "revolt" as "apostasy".

ruin of which would entail so many frightful disasters.

It appears certain, then, that the Roman empire will be completely demolished by Antichrist and that he will substitute another in its place. The Scriptures affirm it; the Fathers almost unanimously assert it; St. Augustine (Jib. 20 de Civit., C. 19) explicitly says that he cannot see how the text of St. Paul can be otherwise interpreted, nor how to give to Theodoret's opinion another meaning. Lactance says that the Roman empire, which today governs the world - terrible to say, but true for all - will be swept from the face of the earth. The empire shall return to Asia; the oriental countries shall reign once more and lord it over the Western nations. (Lib. 7, 15). But it is as difficult to understand what is meant here by the word "empire" and to determine its duration as to find the solution to Jacob's problem relative to the permanency of the scepter in Judea. (Gen. 49:10). Some are of opinion that the destruction of the Roman empire and its division among the ten kings will not be the immediate prelude to the apparition of Antichrist. Those ten kings may have successors whose reign may be indefinitely prolonged till the advent of the last conqueror. St. John seems to favor this opinion when he says that "those kings shall receive their power for an hour."

While others believe that the Sacred Scriptures and the Fathers explicitly teach that the coming of Antichrist will take place immediately after the destruction of the empire by the ten kings. According to this opinion, some theologians maintain that the temporal Roman empire has never ceased to exist. In the beginning of the Christian era its sway prevailed over the known world. And if in some parts it has been deposed, it has always existed and still exists, at least virtually, under some shape or form, and shall thus continue to exist till the end of time. To prove this assertion, they compare it to the legs of the statue mentioned in the prophecy of Daniel. When one of the legs of this statue fell, the other did not fall, and the one that fell represents the downfall of the Western Empire, while the standing leg represents the Eastern Empire, which still exists. But it shall fall, as stated in the prophecy. Through the intervention of the Popes, Providence has long since restored the Empire in the person of Charlemagne. It passed from France to Germany, and hence the temporal succession of the Roman Emperors has been perpetuated to our time. (Bellarm. de Summo Pontif.). It is true that the title of Roman Emperor exists no longer; there is, however, as yet a temporal monarchy at Rome which is quite sufficient in the esteem of the supporters of this opinion to save the truth of the prophecy.

If this opinion be true, we might perhaps say that the end is near at hand. We say "perhaps", for Almighty God has not yet said the last word relative to this redoubtable Roman question on which hangs the destiny of the world.

But other theologians maintain that the prophecy refers to the spiritual power of Rome. The Roman Empire is not destroyed says St. Thomas (in 2 The. 2); it is only transformed, that is, the temporal power has become spiritual as St. Leo remarks in the feast of the Holy Apostles. Hence, the disaffection of which the Apostle speaks is a revolt

not only against the temporal empire, but also against the spiritual empire, that is, against the faith of the Roman Church. And further on he adds "that many must yet receive the faith, and many shall lose it to such an extent that the Church will be desolated and devastated by the great apostasy before the coming of Antichrist."

By spiritual empire, we do not mean the religious government of individuals alone, but also the introduction of religious principles into the social order. Europe, though divided into several kingdoms, has felt the religious action of Rome in its laws and public institutions. The great ancient pagan empire of Rome has become the Christian empire governed by the law of Christ and the law of the Church, which represents Jesus Christ upon earth. This "law" emanates from Rome, the new Sion. [de Sion exiit lex; Is. 2:3]. At present the evil tendencies of men lead them to arrest as much as possible the action of the Roman Church on mankind. Were we to form our judgment from the signs of the times - the conjured perversity of men who band together for the sole purpose of subverting the Catholic Church, or at least to destroy its influence throughout the world - we feel inclined to think that we see in them the commencement of the final apostasy foretold by St. Paul. (2 The. 2:3). However this may be, it is a known fact that God has made the nations curable. The present blindness may be only a transitory evil to which shall succeed a more perfect development and ready acceptance of the Catholic doctrine among the nations of the earth.

2. I. Uncertainty in Which the Epoch of the last Events is Enveloped

II. Prudence to be Observed in the Interpretation of the Precursory Signs of the End of the World

It is by no means our intention to specify the time when those last events or forerunners of the world's destruction will happen. Human wisdom invariably fails to obtain a solution when there is question of scrutinizing the designs of God. "Who hath been his counsellor and who hath taught him?" (Is. 40:13).

The Apostles having asked Jesus to tell them when the end of the world would come, He replied (Mat. 24:36): "Of that day and hour no one knoweth, no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone."

God has therefore willed that the end of the world should be for us as great a secret as the day and hour of our death.

Should we undertake to point out that time, we would certainly transgress the counsel of the wise man, "In many of God's works be not curious." (Ecclesiasticus 3:22). If we are constantly prepared for the hour of death, we are also prepared for the end of time. Moreover, a foreknowledge either of the proximate or remote approach of this ter-

rible catastrophe would only serve to make us the victims either of fear or presumption.

The rumors of the end of time caused much uneasiness to the Thessalonians (2 The^s. 2:1-3): "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you be not easily moved from your mind, nor be frightened, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by epistle as sent from us, as if the day of the Lord were at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means." History records the great panic caused in the year 1000 by a false interpretation given to a passage in the Apocalypse (20:2-15), which was preached by a few fanatics who maintained that the end of the world was at hand.

The devil gains immensely by the circulation of false interpretations of the prophecies; for when they are not justified by the event, those who are weak in their faith take occasion to doubt the genuine prophecies of the Scriptures, or at least find a pretext to question their veracity or revoke them in doubt. St. Augustine (in Epist. 80 ad Heszch.), speaking on this subject, says: "He who indiscreetly announces the coming of Christ falls into a noxious error. Supposing that his prophecy is not justified by the event, men will not say that the event has been postponed, but they will say that it will never happen, which must prove very injurious to their faith."

At first sight it seems to be, if not impossible, at least very difficult to reconcile the Holy Scriptures and the sayings of some of the Fathers with events which, according to the world's view and measurement of time, should have already taken place.

The prophets of the Old Law speak of the end of the world as being just at hand. "Behold," says Sophonias (1:14 [sic]), "he comes." In similar terms Ezechiel exclaims (7:6), "The end has come."* In the New Law, St. Peter warns us that "the end of all things is at hand." (1 Pet. 4:7). St. John says that the last hour has arrived. (1 Jn. 2:18). Our Saviour assures us that "this generation will not pass away before all these things will come to pass." (Mat. 24:34; Lk. 21:32).**

St. Gregory the Great, seeing the calamities that followed the overthrow of the Oriental empire, did not hesitate to say that the end of the world was at hand. (In homil. 1 in Evang. et lib., 8 ep., 41 et homil. 4 in Evang.). St. Ambrose says that he is assisting at the last catastrophe. (Lib. 10 in Luke). St. Hilary speaks of the Arian persecution as

*Kramer (op. cit.) points out that the prophetic books of the Bible often use past tense to describe future events. We would suggest that this peculiarity is perhaps due to the prophet's viewpoint. He sees the seed of the future event (if we may so speak) already planted in the sequence of time, and thus the growth and flowering of that seed is only a question of time; whereas, the normal person sees only the flowering—the external manifestation. For example, at the Last Supper Our Lord said, "The prince of this world has already been judged." (Jn. 16-11). Yet we know Satan very much holds sway in the world today. But through the teaching of Christ, His death on the cross, through the Mass and Sacraments, the devil will ultimately be defeated. At the time Our Lord spoke, the seed of victory had been planted.

**As the author points out below, we must ask what is the meaning of "generation" as Our Lord used the term.

being the final trial. (In Constant et in lib. Contra Arianos et August.). And st. Cyprian exclaims: "The day of tribulation begins to dawn upon us; the world is near its end; the time of Antichrist is close at hand; let us prepare for the combat." [Lib. 4, C. 6].

It seems a difficult task to reconcile the Holy Scriptures and the sayings of the Fathers with the past. It is NOW eighteen hundred years since the last hour, spoken of by st. John, has begun. [In] Spite of the Fathers' apprehensions, the world has continued to exist. Are we not tempted to accuse the Scriptures of error and tax the Fathers with levity and imprudence? No, the Faith tells us that would be very sinful.

God, who is ever faithful to His words (Ps. 144:13), has met the objection when He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but MY words shall not pass." (Mat. 24:35), also when He inspired St. Peter to say: "Knowing this first, that in the last days there shall come deceitful scoffers, walking after their OWN lusts, saying where is his promise or his coming? for, from the time that the fathers slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation . . . But of this one thing be not ignorant, MY beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord delayeth not his promise, as some imagine; but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance." (2 Pet. 3:3-9). His first advent, which He delayed for at least four thousand years, was foretold in terms similar to those that refer to His second coming. Isaias said (14:1), "His [sic] time is near at hand." And the prophet Aggeus said relative to the same coming: "Yet one little while and I will move the heavens and the earth." (2:7). And this "yet a little while," embraces a period of seven hundred years.

Hence, it is quite evident that God measures time differently from the manner in which we measure it. And the space of time that seems long to us is as nought to the Eternal, who can say at any time and at any length of time, "I will soon come." (Apoc. 3:11). The prophet Habacuc says (2:3), "It [the vision'] seems as yet far off; however, it shall appear at the end; if it make any delay, wait for it, for it shall surely come, and it shall not be slack." Do not do as did the servant spoken of in the Gospel according to st. Luke (12:45-47), who said in his heart, "My Lord is long a coming . . . The Lord of that servant will come in the day that he hopeth not, and at the hour that he knoweth not, and because of this bad conduct will treat him as he merits."

The holy Fathers, speaking of the proximity of the end of the world, spoke in perfect conformity with the Holy Scriptures, while the calamities and scourges which they witnessed were indeed signs of a probable approach to the end. Is it not prudent to exhort the faithful to prepare to meet the Sovereign Judge at a time when grave reasons exist for doing so, just as it is prudent to put all our temporal and spiritual matters in order when we are threatened by a dangerous sickness? It was in this sense that the Fathers, mistaken perhaps in their conjectures, but not in the spirit of prudence by which they were actuated, announced the end of the world. It was a well-founded fear which they

expressed at the sight of the calamities of their times, and who can gainsay their action?

But some will perhaps say that the signs of the second coming of Our Saviour are not infallible since the Fathers have been deceived in them.

It is quite easy to answer this difficulty. Among the signs which are the forerunners of the end of the world, some are characteristic, such as the preaching of the Gospel throughout the universe, in the sense already indicated, and the apparition of Antichrist; the other signs are common to all times.

Those signs of the last category are of four kinds:

First - Eternal persecutions: "But before all these things they will lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prisons, dragging you before kings and governors for my name's sake . . . They will persecute and put you to death." The world will despise and maltreat you on my account; many of my disciples will be scandalized in me; they will betray and detest each other. (Lk. 21:12-17). This prophecy has been partially fulfilled since the establishment of the Church and will be completed in the days of Antichrist.

Second - Internal persecutions: "And Jesus answering said to them, take heed that no man seduce you. For many will come in my name saying, I am Christ, and they will seduce many." (Mat. 24:4). The Church has been desolated by many and great heresies, but the Great Apostasy is yet to come.

Third - Great wars among nations: "And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars . . . For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom." (Mat. 24:6-7). Similar calamities have always existed and will continue to happen throughout all ages until the prophecy is realized in the terrible wars of Antichrist.

Fourth - The subversion and confusion of the elements: "And there shall be pestilences and famines and earthquakes in places," and terrible signs shall be in the heavens. (Mat. 24:7). History records numerous facts which vindicate the words of Our Saviour. The future, and especially the latter days of the world, shall reveal those terrible calamities in all their frightful bearings.

When those signs will appear, we may behold them with the eye of Faith as the crisis of the world's agony, under which it is doomed to succumb sooner or later. At present, the deleterious action of those evils is circumscribed, "for they are only the beginning of sorrows." (Mat. 24:8). But when the world shall enter its agony, they shall then conspire its complete destruction. The whole world, the inanimate nature, shall fight with God against the unwise. (Wis. 5:21).

We can say nothing more explicit than this as to when the end of the world will be. We cannot say to what extent we are justified in accepting the opinion which gives six thousand years duration to the world, even when supported by some Fathers and theologians.

The world was created in six days, and as one day for God is as a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:8), the world shall last six thousand years. Such

is the manner in which St. Justin reasons on the subject. (Quest. 71 ad Gentes. J. St. Irene[u]s (Lib. 5), Lactance (Lib. 7, C. 14), St. Hilary (in Caput, 17 Mat.), St. Jerome (in Ps. 89 ad Cyprianum), hold the same opinion. The Thalmudists have a similar tradition, which they say was preserved in the house of one Elias. St. Augustine (Lib. 20, de Civet [sic], C. 7) regards this opinion as probable. But St. Ambrose (in Libro 7 in Luke) and several other Fathers give it no credence. Among the theologians, Bellarmine teaches it as being probable.

A recent anonymous author of the percursors of Antichrist has made an ingenious calculation on the subject, which we treat as a simple conjecture [pub's emphasis], leaving to each one to judge the degree of credence that it merits. He finds his opinion on the following text from Daniel (12:11-12): "From the time of the abolition of the perpetual sacrifice and the abomination of desolation there will be 1,290 days; happy for those who will see 1,335 days." This epoch seems to begin with Mohamet, which coincides very nearly with the downfall of the Roman pagan empire. Mohamet did indeed abolish the perpetual sacrifice wherever his arms have been victorious, and all seem to agree that the prophecy of Daniel designates the end of the Roman pagan empire by these words, "the abomination of desolation." The year 622, when Mohamet fled from Mecca, will therefore be the beginning of the 1,290 days. Now the word "day" in the prophecies of Daniel often bears the signification of year, and 1,290 being added to 622 gives a sum of 1912, or the year in which Antichrist is to come, whose reign will last 45 years. Hence the persecution of Antichrist will commence in A.D. 1953 and end in A.D. 1951, as it is to last during three years and six months. The year 1957 will, therefore, be the last year of the world, according to the opinion by which it is supposed to be destroyed forty-five days after the death of Antichrist. Other commentators say that Antichrist will be born in the year 1855. This is the opinion of the pious Holzhouzer.*

We must confess that there is nothing more problematic than these computations.

END

*These erroneous estimates should reinforce the traditional view, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief," (2 Pet. 3:10), and "Of that day and hour no one knows." (Mat. 24:36). What is certain, however, is that "The Day of the Lord" will occur. The Bible is replete with mention of it (one need only consult the Old Testament prophets), plus the last book of the Bible, the Apocalypse, is devoted almost entirely to this subject and the events leading up to it. Two extremes must be avoided: 1) Denying "The Day of the Lord" as an event certain to come; and 2) predicting with exactitude the time of its occurrence. The Christian's duty, rather, is to be always ready, like the wise virgins of Our Lord's parable.

IN HOC SIGNO VINCES.