

The “New and Divine Holiness” and Eschatology

By Hugh Owen / Digest of the original 16 page Study.

Eschatology is defined as the study of the Last Things. Since the “New and Divine Holiness” represents a new, profound, and perhaps ultimate insight into the Divine Holiness of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, it cries out to be integrated into an orthodox Eschatology. This article will attempt to show how the writings of the nineteenth and twentieth century Exemplars of the new and divine holiness beautifully illuminate and harmonize with the eschatological doctrine of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. The better we understand the eschatological significance of the Exemplars’ writings, the more they can serve as a beacon of hope during the trials and tribulations of *the present darkness*.

In this article we will see how men and women of many centuries, recognized by the Church for their holiness, have consistently predicted a certain series of events which precede the rise of Antichrist, the Second Coming of Jesus, and the Final Judgment. We will see that the writings of the Exemplars of the New and Divine Holiness perfectly agree with this sequence and amply confirm Pope John Paul II’s expectation of a “new and divine holiness which will make Christ the heart of the world..”

Eschatology and Sacred Tradition

The Councils teach that whenever the Fathers all agree on an interpretation of Scripture, that interpretation must be accepted by the Faithful. In regard to the Last Things, there are several points that most if not all of the Fathers agreed upon. These points include the existence of some kind of restored Roman Empire at the end of time, when peace will reign, the Gospel will be preached to the whole world, and all Jewish people will return to the Holy Land.

According to the majority of the Fathers, this period will be followed by a time of apostasy, the advent of the Antichrist, and the appearance of Enoch and Elijah, who will confront the Antichrist and trigger the mass conversion of the Jewish people shortly before the Second Coming of Jesus, the General Resurrection and the Final Judgment. The Fathers who predicted all or most of these things include St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, and St. Ephraem.¹ Within the framework provided by these Fathers and Doctors of the Church, additional details about the eschatological future of the Church can be learned from the prophetic writings of men and women whose writings the appropriate ecclesiastical authorities have found to be free from error and who have been judged by the same authorities to have practiced heroic virtue.

“Despise not Prophecy”

¹ For a more complete discussion of this subject, readers may want to consult an excellent book by Desmond Birch entitled *Trial, Tribulation, and Triumph*, to whose work the present author is greatly indebted. This article goes beyond the scope of Mr. Birch’s book in two important respects, however. It explores in greater depth the spiritual dimension of the era of peace and the possible fulfillment of the eschatological predictions of the apostolic fathers after the rise and fall of Antichrist.

Long before the first Advent of Jesus, the prophet Amos testified that **“God does nothing without informing his servants the prophets.”** And prophecy did not cease with the Incarnation. In his letter to the Thessalonians, St. Paul exhorts the Church to **“despise not prophecy but hold fast to what is good.”** Prophecy can reveal hidden truths of the past, the present or the future, although **prophecies concerning the future bear most directly on Eschatology.** ~~~ Future prophecy directed the Jewish Christians of First Century Jerusalem to flee the city before the Roman legions began their siege. Future prophecy also inspired the first Christians at Antioch to anticipate a famine and to set food aside for the support of their brethren.

Future prophecy can be either conditional or unconditional. When the prophet Jonah told the Ninevites, **“Forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed,”** he announced a conditional prophecy, dependent for its fulfillment on the response of the people. Other prophecies, like the prophecy of the Archangel Gabriel to Daniel announcing 483 years from the order to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem to the “cutting off”—or death—of the Messiah, are absolute and irrevocable. In either case, **a loving response to prophecy can alter the course of history, either by forestalling a future event or by mitigating its effects.**

In this article, we will examine a continuous thread of credible Catholic future prophecy dating back to the Patristic Era that has predicted with remarkable accuracy the current crisis of faith, its climax, and its resolution during an era of peace that will precede the advent of Antichrist and the final stage of human history. **During many centuries of Christian monarchical governments in Europe, these prophetic voices foretold the advent of an era of secular republican regimes, a grave crisis of faith within the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church, followed by a resolution of the crisis by divine intervention and the reestablishment of a Christian kingdom over much of the world.** During a universal era of peace under the spiritual leadership of a Pope of extraordinary holiness, these prophetic voices also predict an unprecedented flowering of holiness that will begin during the crisis of faith and reach its zenith during the era of peace.

Prophetic Testimony of the Fathers and Saints

Known as the “Harp of the Holy Spirit,” St. Ephraem, the Syrian Father and Doctor of the Church, wrote of a future time before the advent of Antichrist when

The Lord from his glorious heaven shall set up his peace . . . in the place of this latter people. . . and [after that] coming forth from perdition, the man of iniquity shall be revealed upon the earth, the Seducer of men, and the Disturber of the whole earth.²

In subsequent centuries, many men and women recognized by the Church for their great holiness confirmed the key elements of this prophecy and added significant details. We will examine some of them here.

² Desmond A. Birch, *Trial, Tribulation, and Triumph* (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing Company, 1996), p. 547.

Venerable Marianne de Jesus Torres (1563-1635) belonged to the first convent of sisters in the New World. This remarkable Franciscan nun not only predicted the Republican Revolution in Ecuador against Spain. She also predicted in precise detail the future promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the sufferings of Blessed Pope Pius IX, the advent and martyrdom of Ecuador's saintly president Garcia Moreno in the Nineteenth Century, an unprecedented crisis of faith and morals at the end of the Twentieth Century, and the ultimate renewal of the Church after the crisis under the leadership of a holy Pope. More than three centuries before our time, the Blessed Mother asked Venerable Marianne and her sisters to make reparation for the sins of the Twentieth Century, especially through the intercession of Our Lady of Good Success. In her final testament Venerable Marianne told her sisters that the Twentieth Century

... will be a time of great corruption of customs, and this devotion will be the safeguard of this land during the times to come when it will no longer be a Colony, but a free and libertine Republic. Let us weep, pray, and do penance so that this time will not be of long duration.

The secular clergy will leave much to be desired because priests will become careless in their sacred duties. Lacking the divine compass, they will stray from the road traced by God for the priestly ministry, and they will become attached to wealth and riches, which they will unduly strive to obtain. How the Church will suffer during this dark night! Lacking a Prelate and Father to guide them with paternal love, gentleness, strength, wisdom and prudence, many priests will lose their spirit, placing their souls in great danger. This will mark the arrival of *My hour*.

Triumph over Evil

During the Nineteenth Century, Blessed Anna Maria Taigi, a simple, saintly Roman housewife, received one of the most remarkable mystical gifts ever recorded—a luminous globe in which God revealed to her events taking place in various places in the present and in the future. During the intense power struggle between the Pope Pius VII and Napoleon, Blessed Anna Maria prayed and suffered for the Holy Father. In her luminous globe God revealed to her the precise date of the liberation of Pope Pius VII, the decline and fall of Napoleon, the exact date of his death, and many other events that she predicted with pinpoint accuracy. In harmony with the other prophecies mentioned above, and of which she appears to have known nothing, Blessed Anne Maria foretold a time of terrible tribulation when the enemies of the Church would appear to triumph. At this time:

God will ordain two punishments: one, in the form of wars, revolutions, and other evils, will originate on earth; the other will be sent from Heaven. There will come over all the earth an intense darkness lasting three days and three nights. Nothing will be visible and the air will be laden with pestilence, which will claim principally but not exclusively, the enemies of religion . . . Only blessed candles can be lighted and will afford illumination . . . All the enemies of the Church,

secret as well as known, will perish over the whole earth during that universal darkness, with the exception of a few, whom God will soon after convert. The air will be infected by demons who will appear under all sorts of hideous forms.

After the three days of darkness, St. Peter and St. Paul, having come down from heaven, will preach in the whole world and designate a new Pope. A great light will flash from their bodies and will settle upon the Cardinal, the future Pontiff. Then Christianity will spread throughout the world. He is the Holy Pontiff, chosen by God to withstand the storm. At the end he will have the Gift of Miracles, and His name shall be praised over the whole earth.³

Whole nations will come back to the Church, and the face of the earth will be renewed. Russia, England, and China will come into the Church.⁴

Blessed Mary of Jesus Crucified, a Carmelite from Galilee famous for her holiness, her levitations and for the beautiful mystical poetry that she wrote in ecstasy, also predicted that God would cleanse the earth of evil during three days and nights of darkness:

During a darkness lasting three days the people given to evil will perish so that only one fourth of mankind will survive.⁵

St. Caspar del Bufalo, founder of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, also foretold these three days and nights of perpetual darkness.

The death of the impenitent persecutors of the Church will take place during three days of darkness. He who outlives the darkness and the fear of these three days will think that he is alone on the earth because the whole world will be covered with cadavers.⁶

Venerable Elizabeth Cani-Mora (1774-1825) who freed Count John Maria de Mastai Ferreti (the future Blessed Pope Pius IX) from epilepsy which had prevented him from becoming a priest, not only predicted the three days of darkness but also the special role of St. Peter in choosing a new Pope to lead the Church into a new era.

As soon as St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles, had gathered the flock of Jesus Christ in a place of safety, he re-ascended into heaven, accompanied by legions of angels. Scarcely had they disappeared, when the sky was covered with clouds so dense and dismal that it was impossible to look at them without dismay. On a sudden there burst out such a terrible and violent wind, that its noise sounded like the roars of furious lions. The sound of the furious hurricane was heard over the whole earth. Fear and terror struck not only men, but the very beasts.⁷

³ Birch, op. cit., pp. 288-289.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 288-289.

⁵ Ibid, p. 286.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, p. 288.

During the Twentieth Century, Sister Elena Aiello, Foundress of the Calabrian nuns, also saw visions of the **three days of darkness** and the chastisement of the Church's enemies:

Clouds with lightning rays of fire and a tempest of fire will pass over the whole world and the punishment will be the most terrible ever known in the history of mankind. **It will last 70 hours [three days]**. The wicked will be crushed and eliminated. Many will be lost because they will have stubbornly remained in their sins. Then they will feel the force of light over darkness. The hours of darkness are near.⁸

The patron saint of parish priests, St. John Vianney, the wonder-worker of Ars, possessed the Gift of Prophecy to a high degree. He, too, foresaw a time so evil that it would appear that "all is lost," until a miniature judgment by God would cleanse the earth.

A Civil War shall break out everywhere. These wicked people... will imprison very many [persons], and will be guilty of more massacres. They will attempt to kill all priests and all the religious. But this shall not last long. People will imagine that all is lost; but the good God shall save all. It will be like a "sign" of the last judgment'... Religion shall flourish again better than ever before.⁹

An Era of Holiness and Peace

According to numerous saints, the new era that will begin after **the three days and nights of darkness** will be an era of holiness and peace during which God will renew the face of the earth.

According to many holy men and women whose writings have been approved by the Church, the era of peace will be characterized by a new flowering of holiness which in turn will flow from a new and deeper identification with the Interior Life of Jesus. The great champion of devotion to the Sacred Heart in Spain, Fr. Hoyos

... saw in spirit those happy times when all prophecies would be fulfilled and all nations would serve God. On another occasion he was given to understand how, by means of the new devotions which are ever springing forth in the Church, the Savior discloses to us new treasures of His goodness and new perfections which we should copy in ourselves in order to become more like Him and to arrive at a perfection similar to that of the Blessed. So, he states, our Lord manifested to him the glory that those souls would have through knowing and loving the affections and movements of His Sacred Heart which He manifests to the Church so that the Faithful may fashion their hearts in the likeness of His. **Thus many souls will learn**

⁸ Ibid, p. 293.

⁹ Ibid, p. 275.

from this divine heart a perfection which is much higher in love and suffering .
.. (emphasis added).¹⁰

The great French Missionary and spiritual writer St. Louis de Montfort predicted a time when God would intervene with a “deluge of fire, love, and justice,” “destroying sin” and error and restoring the Church.¹¹

I have said that this would come to pass, particularly at the end of the world and indeed presently, because the Most High with His holy Mother has to form for Himself **great saints who shall surpass most of the other saints in sanctity as much as the cedars of Lebanon outgrow the little shrubs**¹². . . The formation and education of the great saints who shall come at the end of the world are reserved for her. They shall be great and exalted before God in sanctity, superior to all other creatures by their lively zeal, and so well sustained with God’s assistance that, with the humility of their heel, in union with Mary, they shall crush the head of the devil and cause Jesus Christ to triumph.¹³

In Mexico, Venerable Conchita de Armida, wife, mystic, mother of nine, and inspiration behind five associations approved by the Church, heralded a new era of the Holy Spirit in which priests and lay people would be transformed into the perfect interior likeness of Christ:

The time has come to exalt the Holy Spirit in the world. He is the soul of this Beloved Church. This divine Person diffuses Himself prodigally in every act of the Church. I desire that this last epoch be consecrated in a very special way to **this Holy Spirit who ever operates out of love.** He guided the Church from her very humble beginnings, by the three humble acts of humble love in Peter. I desire that, in these latter days, this holy love inflame all hearts but most of all the hearts of the Pope and My priests. It is His turn, it is His epoch, it is the triumph of love in My Church, in the whole universe.¹⁴

According to Our Lord’s revelations to Venerable Conchita, the communion of souls with Jesus in his interior sufferings would form an integral part of his triumph over the forces of evil. Across the ocean in Italy, Saint Hannibal Di Francia, the extraordinary confessor of the victim soul, the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta, wrote that she, too

joined the infinite repairing intentions of the suffering God-Man, offering to Him, to the Father, and to Divine Justice, infinite reparations for everyone and everything. In view of the multiplied iniquities of the current generations . . . **it is**

¹⁰ Bernard Hoyos, S.J., was primarily responsible for spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart throughout Spain in the eighteenth century.

¹¹ St. Louis De Montfort, *Prayer for Missionaries*, 13, 15, 24-25; *True Devotion*, 49-56.

¹² St. Louis De Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*, Article 47.

¹³ *Ibid*, Article 54.

¹⁴ Quoted in Marie-Michel Philipon, O.P., *Conchita*, translated by Aloysius J. Owen, S.J. (New York: Alba House, 1978), pp. 195-196 (March 2, 1928).

precisely this kind of vast, urgent, and universal reparation that our sad times demand.¹⁵

In 1997, on the centenary of the founding of the Rogationist Fathers by Saint Fr. Hannibal Di Francia (1851-1927), Pope John Paul II exhorted the spiritual sons of Saint Hannibal to recognize and emulate the distinctive character of their Founder's holiness. He wrote:

The modern means that human sciences and contemporary technology make available and that you rightly try to use in your apostolic work will only be effective if they are sustained and guided by the original charismatic inspiration of the blessed Founder, who saw in the "Rogate"¹⁶ the means God Himself had provided to bring about **that "new and divine" holiness with which the Holy Spirit wishes to enrich Christians at the dawn of the third millennium, in order to "make Christ the heart of the world."**¹⁷

Saint Hannibal referred to three fiats, or divine interventions, in history. These were **the fiat of Creation in the beginning, the fiat of Redemption at the Incarnation, and the fiat of Sanctification in our times**, "with which," in his words, "begins the **new spirit of a new holiness.**"¹⁸

Final Apostasy and Antichrist

In the writings of the Saints and Doctors concerning a future time of Tribulation and Judgment followed by an era of peace and evangelization, some predict that this period will last one generation, while others predict a longer period of peace.¹⁹ However, near unanimity exists among the Fathers and Doctors that the era of peace will ultimately give way to a final Apostasy that will set the stage for the final Antichrist.

In this same vein, the Fifteenth Century wonder-working Dominican preacher St. Vincent Ferrer prophesied:

In the days of peace that are to come after the desolation of revolutions and wars—before the end of the world—Christians will become so lax in their religion that they will refuse the Sacrament of Confirmation (Editor: i.e. "The Baptism, by Jesus, in the Holy Spirit"), saying that it is unnecessary. And when the false prophet, the precursor of Antichrist, comes, all who are not confirmed

¹⁵ Blessed Hannibal Di Francia.

¹⁶ The Latin word, "Rogate" (in English "Pray") alludes to Our Lord's command in *Luke 10:2*: "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

¹⁷ Pope John Paul II, "Letter on the Centenary of the Rogationist Fathers," *L' Osservatore Romano* (English edition), July 9, 1997, p. 3.

¹⁸ "Atto di Consacrazione di tutte le Figlie del Divino Zelo del Cuore di Gesu" (#4395 in the archives of Blessed Hannibal Di Francia), 1921.

¹⁹ It is also possible that life spans might be longer during the era of peace as a consequence of the almost Eden-like conditions that will exist on the earth during that time.

(Editor: “Spirit-filled”) will apostatize, while those who are confirmed (“Spirit-filled”) will stand fast in their faith, and only a few will renounce Christ.²⁰

After reviewing the Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers concerning Antichrist and the end of the world, the Seventeenth Century doctor, St. Robert Bellarmine, summarized the Patristic tradition in these words:

For it must be known that in the divine letters [Scripture], the Holy Spirit to have given to us **six sure signs** concerning the coming of Antichrist: **two** which precede Antichrist himself, namely the preaching of the Gospel in the whole world and the devastation of the Roman Empire²¹: the two contemporaneous men [the Two Witnesses], which is to be seen prophesied Enoch and Elias, and the greatest and last persecution, and also that the public sacrifice [of the Mass] shall completely cease, the **two** following signs surely, the death of Antichrist after three and a half years [after his rise to power] and the end of the world; none of which signs we have seen at this time.²²

To these six signs might be added a seventh—the conversion of the entire Jewish people after the preaching of Enoch and Elias in Jerusalem, an event attested to by most of the Fathers and Doctors who commented on the days of Antichrist. What is not so certain is the period of time between the destruction of Antichrist and the final judgment and the end of the world. St. Robert Bellarmine voiced the opinion of most modern Doctors of the Church when he stated that “**‘This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, and then shall come the consummation’** (of the world) that is, a little after [Antichrist] shall come the end of the world”

According to St. Irenaeus and the other Fathers of the first three and a half centuries who commented on **Revelation 20**, at the end of the times of the kingdom after the defeat of Antichrist God would permit Satan to tempt the nations one last time, to test the love of his children. After the defeat of this final assault, the apostolic Fathers foretold the General Resurrection, the Final Judgment and the Transformation of the world.²³

Conclusion

²⁰ Dupont, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

²¹ That this Roman Empire is a future entity contemporaneous with the era of peace is the unanimous, or nearly unanimous, teaching of the Fathers of the Church. St. Jerome wrote that “all the ecclesiastical writers have passed down” that this kingdom of the Romans will only be destroyed at the consummation of the world [consummatione mundi], after the Gospel has been preached to all the world during the era of peace (cf. Birch, pp. 481-483).

²² Birch, pp. 481-483.

²³ The proper interpretation of Revelation 20 is beyond the scope of this article, but it seems to this author quite possible that the thousand years of Revelation 20 could be taken literally if the era of peace is limited to one or several generations and the subsequent times of the kingdom after the defeat of Antichrist complete the years of the millennium. Of course, it is also quite possible to interpret the thousand years as an indefinite period of time during which the Holy Spirit will reign gloriously in souls.

It bears pointing out that few, if any, of the future prophecies recounted in the main body of this article are unconditional. For example, it is conceivable that the era of peace could take place without a direct divine chastisement if enough souls abandoned themselves to God. The interplay of times, places, and persons foretold in these prophecies could also be fulfilled in various ways, depending on the free response of present and future men and women to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. What is quite certain is that God will soon put an end to this present darkness, with chastisements more or less severe depending upon our response to His Divine Mercy.

In France, in the late eighteenth century, a holy nun by the religious name of Sister of the Nativity was commanded to recount her prophetic visions to her spiritual director, the Abbe' Genet. Sister of the Nativity foresaw the bloody days of the French Revolution as the first phase of a long period of trials and tribulations. She testified:

I see in God that—a long time before the rise of Antichrist—the world will be afflicted with the many bloody wars . . . I saw in the light of the Lord that The Faith and our holy Religion would become weaker in almost every Christian kingdom. God has permitted that they should be chastised by the wicked in order that to awaken them from their apathy. And after the justice of God has been satisfied, He will pour out an abundance of graces on His Church, and He will spread The Faith and restore the discipline of the Church in those countries where it had become tepid and lax.

I saw in God that our Mother, holy Church, will spread in many countries and will produce her fruits in abundance to compensate for the outrages she will have suffered from the impiety and the persecutions of her enemies . . . I saw that the poor people, weary of the arduous labors and trials that God sent to them, shall then be thrilled with a joy that God will infuse into their good hearts. The Church will become, by her faith and by her love, more fervent and more flourishing than ever. Our good Mother the Church will witness many amazing things, even on the part of former persecutors, for they will come forward and throw themselves at her feet . . .

Sister of the Nativity told Abbe Genet that “the knowledge of these things shall contribute to the salvation of many souls, and form a treasure for the Faithful of the last age of the world.”

It is our hope that the knowledge conveyed by this article may indeed contribute to the encouragement and sanctification of many souls during the passage from this present darkness into the bright dawn of the era of peace.