



Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil

Bernard McGinn

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In this timely and sweeping exploration, one of the greatest living historians of Christian thought traces the concept of Antichrist from its Judeo-Christian origins to the present day. Rooted in Second Temple Judaism--a period of intense religious and political disruption--Antichrist developed out of belief in malevolent angelic and human forces. McGinn demonstrates how Antichrist has often reflected the human need to comprehend the persistence of evil in the world, and examines how it has haunted popular imagination in both the form of individuals--such as Nero, Napoleon, and Saddam Hussein--and groups--Jews, heretics, Muslims.

Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil Details

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From Reader Review Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil for online ebook

Jennifer says

I bought this book ages and ages ago. I don't remember why or when. Last year one of my reading resolutions was to read more of my religion books, which I absolutely failed to do. But it explains how this ended up finally on my to-read shelf when I was looking for a new non-fiction book to read.

So, this book tracks Christianity's changing views on the Antichrist, from Jewish pre-Christ apocalyptic writings to the present day. It's a sprawling history with a narrow focus, and I just am not familiar enough with Catholic history to get as much out of the book as I could have. Great swaths of the book felt very much like reading those stretches of *The Name of the Rose* dealing with different sects of the Catholic church, and all the names start to blur together and I'm straining to get anything meaningful out of it at all.

Which is not to say I didn't get anything out of it. It's easy to get mired in the mythos and worldview of your own time. Seeing how the ever-evolving understanding of evil, Antichrist, and end times both shaped and was shaped by the events and forces of history was good perspective on how we got to now.

A good reminder on why I set the goal of reading more books from my religion shelf in the first place.

Alford Wayman says

An excellent overview of the idea of Anti-Christ and apocalypticism starting with early Hebrew literature, through Dead Sea Scrolls, and into the era of Roman Christianity, and concluding with evangelical apocalypticism in the late 1900's. Published in 1994, this book gave an overview of the many works in Jewish and Christian history that show the changes of the anti-christ theme, eschatology, and apocalyptic views in attempts to interpret both history and future. The book is rather short so it would be good for the reader to delve more into the actual texts that were mentioned, because McGinn left a clear trail of motifs and themes which resulted in the type of apocalypticism we have today. Some added, some took away, some redirected, some used it for political means, some for pessimism, and some for optimism. To pick up where McGinn left off I would personally recommend the book *Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession* by Robert C. Fuller. The book was dry history at times, but this text was not built for entertainment but for information. After seeing the early schools of thought on the Anti-Christ it is amazing that certain streams can be found that the reader can follow back to their sources. And some of those sources did not start in the early Jesus communities as most assume.

Angela Wade says

Unreadable.

Liam says

Bernard McGinn, the great University of Chicago scholar of religion, has written extensively on Christian mysticism and apocalyptic spirituality. In *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*, he traces the history of Antichrist from its roots in pre-Christian Jewish apocalypticism to the current day, though the meat of the matter lies in the patristic and medieval eras. He does so with his customary clarity and erudition. Of course, the idea of Antichrist -- the idea of a human summation of evil that leads the world into the last days imagined in Daniel, Revelations, and the "Little Apocalypse" in the Synoptic Gospels -- is so closely tied to more general questions of eschatology and theodicy that at times Prof. McGinn struggles with the problem of what should or should not be included in his survey. Overall, though, this is a brilliant and readable treatment of a fascinating subject.

Dan says

A learned but highly readable survey of the history of the idea of the Antichrist, from early Jewish prophetic writings to the 20th Century. Of especial note is McGinn's examination of how this idea has been used, again and again throughout history, to objectify and demonize political or religious threats, rivals and other groups. Highly recommended as a sane book about religious ideas and their misuse.

Adam says

Bernard McGinn is a legend in the fields of the History of Christianity, Christian spirituality, and Christian mysticism. He's retired now from his position as a Professor of the History of Christianity at the University of Chicago, much to my chagrin. If I had to begin to list the amazing people I've missed out on studying with due to their retiring within the past five years, I'd run out of room.

This is his work on the phenomenon (literally, historically, religiously, socially, and otherwise) of Antichrist throughout history. I've barely begun this book, but its depth is immediately recognizable, as is McGinn's formidable arsenal of knowledge and wide-ranging academic familiarity.

This highly readable book fleshes out and explores the birth and perpetuation of the Antichrist theme throughout human history, beginning in early Christianity and moving on to the current day. With this being such a hot button of a topic among religious fundamentalists and those who love/abhor them, this book is both deeply engaging and guaranteed to draw peculiar stares if you're openly reading it on the bus, subway, or publically elsewhere.

Katharine Holden says

Obscure, tedious. Full of jargon and far too much Jung.
