CHURCH AND EMPIRE IN THE THEOLOGY OF HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME

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by

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APPROVAL SHEET

CHURCH AND EMPIRE IN THE THEOLOGY

OF HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIPHOS	*Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves*
ANF	*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885–1887. 10 vols. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994
Antichr.	*On the Antichrist*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
Aug.	Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars: The Deified Augustus*
Ben. Is. Jac.	*On the Blessings of Isaac and Jacob*
Ben. Mos.	*On the Blessings of Moses*
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
Butterworth	*Hippolytus of Rome: Contra Noetum*. Edited and translated by Robert Butterworth. Heythrop Monographs 2. London: Heythrop College, 1977
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
Bell. Civ.	Lucan, *The Civil War (Pharsalia)*
Comm. Dan.	*Commentary on Daniel*
CPG	*Clavis Patrum Graecorum*. Edited by Maurice Geerard. 5 vols. Turnhout: Brepols, 1974–1987
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalis
CurBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
Falls	Justin Martyr. *Dialogue with Trypho*. Edited by Michael Slusser. Translated by Thomas B. Falls. Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3. Rev. ed. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003

GCS	*Hippolyt Werke: exegetische und homiletische Schriften: kleinere exegetishce und homiletische Schriften*. Edited by Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch and Hans Achelis. Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller 1.2. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897
GCSNF	*Hippolyt Werke: Kommentar zu Daniel*. Edited by Marcel Richard, Albrecht Dihle, and G. Nathaniel Bonwetsch. Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller Neue Folge 7. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000
GSECP	Gorgias Studies in Early Christianity and Patristics
GTS	Grazer Theologische Studien
Haer.	*Against Heresies*
Halton	Jerome. *On Illustrious Men*. Edited by Thomas P. Halton. Fathers of the Church 100. Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999
HeyJ	*Heythrop Journal*
Hist. eccl.	*Ecclesiastical History*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
In Cant.	*On the Song of Songs*
JAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JCT	Jewish and Christian Texts
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JTI	*Journal of Theological Interpretation*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
Litwa	Hippolytus of Rome. *Refutation of All Heresies*. Edited and translated by M. David Litwa. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon.* 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
MUS	Muséon: Revue d'études orientales
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
Noet.	*Against Noetus*
PG	Patrologia Graeca

PGL	*A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Edited by Geoffrey W. H. Lampe. Oxford: Clarendon, 1961
PO	*Hippolyte de Rome sur les Bénédictions d'Isaac, de Jacob et de Moïse*. Edited by Maurice Brière, Louis Mariès, and B. Ch Mercier. Patrologia Orientalis 27. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1954
Princ.	*On First Principles*
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
Ref.	*Refutation of All Heresies (Elenchos)*
Res Gest.	*Res Gestae Divi Augusti*
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
RSR	*Recherches de science religieuse*
RTAM	*Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*
SC	Sources chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943–
Schmidt	*Hippolytus of Rome's Commentary on Daniel*. Edited and translated by T. C. Schmidt. Gorgias Studies in Early Christianity and Patristics 79. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2022
SCJ	Studies in Christianity and Judaism
SEAug	Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
Smith	Smith, Yancy. *The Mystery of Anointing: Hippolytus's Commentary on the Song of Songs in Social and Critical Contexts*. Gorgias Studies in Early Christianity and Patristics 62. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2015
Stob.	Joannes Stobaeus, *Anthology*
SVigChr	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
TS	*Theological Studies*
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*

PREFACE

When I started my doctoral journey, I did not fully grasp how much of a communal effort it would be. Now, as I complete this study, I am profoundly aware of the many colleagues, friends, and family members whose support has made this project possible. Their love, encouragement, and presence have sustained me, and it is to them that I dedicate this preface.

First, I am deeply grateful for my fellow PhD students—Jared Lee, Perry Garrett, Sam Crites, Ben Robin, and Zach Lykens, among others—whose camaraderie and friendship have enriched my experience. I am especially thankful for Zach Hedges, whose friendship has been one of the greatest rewards of my doctoral journey. The unwavering support and companionship have been both an anchor and an inspiration.

Beyond my academic circle, I have been blessed with friends whose presence in my life has been an invaluable source of strength. I am especially thankful for Everett Berry, Brandon Smith, Jake Stone, Daisy Reynolds, Bill Watson, and Barry Creamer. Their influence has shaped not only this project but also the person I have become.

I am also indebted to the faculty members and administrators of Criswell College, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who have challenged and inspired me throughout my academic journey. I am especially grateful for Dr. Christopher Graham, who introduced me to the rich heritage of early Christianity, and to Drs. Jeffrey Bingham and Craig Blaising, whose exemplary commitment to confessional scholarship has profoundly shaped my studies. I also extend my sincere thanks to my committee members, Drs. Michael Haykin and Timothy Paul Jones, for their time, insight, and invaluable feedback.

Among all those who have guided me, none deserves more gratitude than my

supervisor, Dr. Stephen Presley. His kindness and encouragement have been unparalleled. I will always remember trying to keep pace with him at the 2023 meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society as he dashed between sessions to hear his students present their work—always the first to applaud, always the loudest to cheer. My gratitude for his supervision is surpassed only by my appreciation for his mentorship and friendship.

Finally, my deepest thanks go to my family, whose unwavering support has been the foundation of this project. To my mother, who instilled in me a love for learning and whose steadfast faith and hope in the wake of my father's death has been for me one of the greatest proofs of the mystery of the gospel—I am forever grateful. And above all, to my wife, Bryn, who has carried the greatest burden of this project while serving our family with grace, patience, and sacrifice. Her strength is nothing short of extraordinary. She is the greatest blessing of my life, and to her, I dedicate this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study explores Hippolytus's understanding of church and empire within the context of his broader theological vision. Though often cited as a key representative of early Christian anti-imperialism, Hippolytus's critique of empire as a parody of the church has frequently been examined in isolation, with limited attention to its place within his larger theological framework. A more thorough engagement with his thought, however, reveals a more nuanced and theologically sophisticated political imagination than is often recognized. By attending to the exegetical character of his writings and the ways his theological imagination is shaped by his reading of Scripture as a testimony to Christ, one can gain a deeper and more integrated understanding of his vision of church and empire.

Thesis

The central thesis of this study is that Hippolytus's apocalyptic vision of Christ as the image of God profoundly shaped his political imagination, leading him to envision church and empire as rival images of divine power. The coherence of this proposal depends on several theological foundations. The first is Hippolytus's basic conviction that the cross, as the climactic moment in God's creation of his human image, is the definitive revelation of God's power as the one sovereign Creator. The irony of the cross profoundly shapes Hippolytus's understanding of divine power in the way that it reveals God's strength through human weakness.

Second, for Hippolytus, the church represents the goal of the incarnation. The power of the incarnation is not limited to a past event but is extended in the ongoing

embodiment of the Word in the church. The paradigm of the cross continues to unfold in the life of the church as saints from all nations find unity in the incorruptible life of Christ through participation in his sufferings. As saints are conformed to the image of the crucified and risen Son of God, they become the embodiment of God's divine power in the world, a divine power that continues to be revealed in human weakness.

Third, Hippolytus regards the imperial project of unifying all nations under a single earthly ruler as a satanic parody of the church. It represents an idolatrous attempt to mimic God's chief work—the creation of humanity in his image and likeness, Jesus Christ—by raising up the bodies of kings as centers of collective identity. Satan's ambition is premised on a different vision of divine power, one defined by human autonomy and the denial of the mortal quality of fallen human existence. This vision of power, however, does not lead to the creation of human beings in the image and likeness of God but to the bestialisation of humanity under the tyranny of the devil.

Methodology

My methodology in this dissertation is shaped, to a great extent, by the nature of Hippolytus's writings. Hippolytus is not a systematist. He is, above all, an exegete.[1] Apart from his two treatises—*Against Noetus* and *On the Antichrist*, both of which are thoroughly exegetical—his corpus consists of commentaries on individual sections or books of the Bible. To explore the coherence of Hippolytus's theological vision requires sensitivity to the nature and variety of these writings.

The question of methodology is complicated by the ambiguity surrounding the historical figure of Hippolytus. While I will venture a proposal regarding the identity of

[1] Simonetti explains (with some overstatement), "With Hippolytus, catholic exegesis, restricted so far to the controversial, catechetical, or doctrinal purposes, at last frees itself from those fetters and becomes an independent literary genre, with works devoted explicitly to the interpretation, if not yet of an entire book of the Bible, at least of fairly extensive passages." Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, trans. John A. Hughes (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 27.

Hippolytus and the provenance of his writings based on ancient evidence and contemporary theories (chapter 2), the details of Hippolytus's life and ministry remain murky. I do not believe, however, that this jeopardizes my ability to explore the meaning of his writings. While a lack of historical data represents a great loss, consensus regarding the shared authorship of the writings under consideration offers an opportunity to articulate Hippolytus's theological vision through discernment of the internal coherence of his works.[2]

With these considerations in mind, my methodology proceeds, first, with sensitivity to Hippolytus's hermeneutical framework. Patristic exegesis is notoriously difficult to appreciate from a modern perspective. Clarifying in chapter 2 how Hippolytus understands Scripture in relation to the divine economy and, in light of that, how it ought to be read, will enable readers to discern the assumptions behind his approach to Scripture and the consistency with which he interprets it, despite its alienness to much of contemporary biblical interpretation.

Second, because of the nature of *Against Noetus* as an extended christological argument, it will occupy a privileged placed in my consideration of Hippolytus's understanding of the incarnation (chapter 3). While the treatise was written to address a specific historical controversy, the nature of that dispute struck at the very heart of the Christian faith, namely its understanding of the identity of Jesus in relation to God. In responding to his opponents, Hippolytus appeals to the tradition of the apostles that had

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[2] In doing so, my aim is to understand and articulate the *ostensible* meanings of his writings rather than *latent* meanings that are assumed to reflect subconscious structures and perspectives. On the difference between the former (historical theology) and the latter (sociocultural history), see Anthony Briggman and Ellen Scully, "Historical Theology: Aim and Methodology," in *New Narratives for Old: The Historical Method of Reading Early Christian Theology: Essays in Honor of Michel René Barnes*, ed. Anthony Briggman and Ellen Scully (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2022), 1–19. With regards to contemporary sociocultural approaches, I share the perspective of Averil Cameron, who has demonstrated how Christian rhetoric was an important factor in the historical development of the relationship of Christianity to the Roman Empire, which means that my study can ultimately aid in studies of the sociocultural environment in which Hippolytus's texts were written. See Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

been handed down to him, offering his own understanding of the Christian theological vision in its relationship to the controversy at hand. *Against Noetus* will thus serve to anchor my analysis of Hippolytus's writings.

Third, my attempt to discern and articulate a coherent theological vision from Hippolytus's writings requires special attention to the typological shape of his exegesis, especially in chapters 4 and 5. For Hippolytus, Scripture represents a matrix of types and images through which the revelation of God in Christ is known. Combined with the homiletical style of his commentaries, this means that his theological vision largely emerges from within interpretations of scriptural figures and events rather than extended theological reflections. This does not reflect a lack of creativity or theological sophistication but an appreciation of the analogical structure of creation and its reflection in scriptural imagery.[3] To use Hippolytus's scriptural commentary constructively, I will engage his interpretations in a way that is mindful of immediate contexts and internal logic while also coordinating his use of types across his various writings to show how they contribute to a synthesis of his theological vision.[4]

A final methodological consideration pertains to both my overarching project and, more specifically, chapter 5. Historically, studies of early Christian political

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[3] The "exegetical writings" have been underappreciated as resources for understanding Hippolytus's theology because of a perceived lack of sophistication. For example, Bardy labels the *Commentary on Daniel* an "ouvrage populaire" and argues that *Against Noetus* and the *Refutation* must be consulted for a more developed Christology. Gustave Bardy, introduction to *Hippolyte: Commentaire sur Daniel*, ed. and trans. Maurice Lefèvre, SC 14 (Paris: Cerf, 1947), 58, 61.

[4] My approach accentuates the last three items in Michel Barnes's list of methodological commitments for the discipline of historical theology: (1) locating the text in its original context; (2) identifying the presence and effect of tradition in the text; (3) situating the text within an "external" narrative derived from the previous two steps; (4) engaging broadly and deeply with contemporary scholarship relevant to the author, text, and topic; (5) exegeting the text in order to elucidate the author's logic or expression; (6) discerning the conceptual idioms that constitute the building blocks of the author's logic or expression; and (7) judging the meaning of any individual part of the text in relation to the text as a whole. As Barnes acknowledges, this list is neither definitive nor does it reflect a necessary logical progression; however, it does reflect basic methodological principles for sound historical-theological research. Michel René Barnes, "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. S. T. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O'Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 150–51.

reflection have underappreciated theology as its primary context, preferring to situate it within the broader stream of Greco-Roman political-philosophical traditions.[5] This tendency has underappreciated the exegetical and theological resources that shaped the early Christian political imagination in its attempt to draw out correspondences with more philosophically formal expressions of political thought outside the Christian tradition.[6]

While such studies have illuminated early Christian political reflection, my approach assumes the central place of theology and exegesis within Christian political reflection. Ample parallels can be, and have been, drawn between the religiopolitical terms and images employed by Hippolytus and the broader Graeco-Roman milieu, but such parallels must be drawn with sensitivity to the way in which those terms and images are reconfigured within Hippolytus's theological vision. The preaching of the cross

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[5] See, for example, Aland's complaint that much of the study of the historical relationship between church and state had been conducted with little regard to the church's point of view: Kurt Aland, "The Relation between Church and State in Early Times: A Reinterpretation," *JTS* 19, no. 1 (1968): 115.

[6] This tendency is reflected in the use of *political philosophy*, popular during the early to mid-twentieth century, to describe early Christian political reflection. See, for example, Norman H. Baynes, "Eusebius and the Christian Empire," *AIPHOS* 2 (1934): 13–18; and Francis Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background*, 2 vols. (1966; repr., Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2020). This also applies to the use of *political theory*, as in Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*; and R. A. Markus, "The Latin Fathers," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, ed. J. H. Burns (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 101. Historically, this has reflected broader trends in scholarship. As Peter Brown argues, scholars have tended to read too much intellectual formality into certain writings, suggesting *attitude* as a more appropriate description. Peter Brown, "Augustine's Attitude to Religious Coercion," *Journal of Roman Studies* 54 (1964): 107–16. For critiques of this tendency to overformalize, see for example, S. Calderone, "Il pensiero politico di Eusebio di Cesarea," in *I cristiani e l'impero nel IV secolo: colloquio sul cristianesimo nel mondo antico*, ed. G. Baonamente and A. Nestori (Macerata, Italy: Università degli studi di Macerata, 1998), 48–54; Michael J. Hollerich, "Religion and Politics in the Writings of Eusebius: Reassessing the First Court Theologian," *Church History* 59, no. 3 (1990): 309–25; Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe, *Ambrosiaster's Political Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4–7; and Claudia Rapp, "Imperial Ideology in the Making: Eusebius of Caesarea on Constantine as 'Bishop,'" *JTS* 49, no. 2 (1998): 685–95. *Political theology* has become a more popular option in recent decades, and while it effectively highlights the theological nature of early Christian political reflection it too can imply a greater comprehensiveness than is characteristic of the earliest Christian sources. It is also beset by ambiguity, given how it has been used both prescriptively and descriptively. For example, Carl Schmitt, who first popularized the term, used the term prescriptively in making his argument that the concept of state sovereignty is ultimately grounded in theology: "The metaphysical image that a definite epoch forges of the world has the same structure as what the world immediately understands to be appropriate as a form of its political organization." Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (1922; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 46. On the other hand, the term has also been used in a historically descriptive way, as in Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1957; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016). More recently, Michael Hollerich has proposed *theo-political vision* as a viable alternative. Michael Hollerich, *Making Christian History: Eusebius of Caesarea and His Readers* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 10–11.

according to the Scriptures radically reshaped the way early Christians conceptualized divinity and, simultaneously, what it means for humanity to bear the image of God. The effect of this was to push back the horizon of ancient politics in new ways, opening it up to the activity of God in Christ and the church.[7] A fuller appreciation of this reality requires greater attention to the theological vision from which Christian political reflection was birthed.

Summary of Research

At the broadest level, my examination of the theme of church and empire in Hippolytus's writings engages two primary areas of scholarship: Hippolytan research and studies on early Christian political thought. The following review highlights key works that have shaped and informed my approach to these areas of study. Additional interactions with key resources are included in the chapters that follow.

Hippolytan Studies

Hippolytan studies have not engaged the political dimensions of Hippolytus's theology, including his views on church and empire, to any significant extent. A major reason is the field's preoccupation with the Hippolytan question, as scholars have tried to sort out thorny questions regarding the identity and writings of this enigmatic figure.[8]

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[7] I borrow this phrasing from O'Donovan, who uses it to prescribe the way political theology should operate. I find it to be an apt description of the political implications of early Christian theology. See Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2. As Wolin explains, whereas the classical world had conceived of time largely in political terms, the early Christian view of time transcended the political. Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 112–13. The theological vision of the early church constituted what Wolin calls an "architectonic vision," in which the "political imagination attempts to mould the totality of political phenomena to accord with some vision of the Good that lies outside the political order" (Wolin, 19).

[8] For summaries of the various proposals and the evidence involved, see Katharina Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift in Danielem: kommunikative Strategien eines frühchristlichen Kommentars* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 18–34; J. A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West: The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3–123; W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom*

While this focus has discouraged deeper engagement with Hippolytus's theology, it has ultimately led to a widely accepted consensus on how his writings should be grouped. This, in turn, has established a more solid foundation for exploring the coherence of his thought.[9]

Despite preoccupation with the Hippolytan question, scholars, nonetheless,

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from Exegesis in Hippolytus: An Early Church Presbyter's Commentary on Daniel (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2008), 7–21; T. C. Schmidt, ed. and trans., introduction to *Hippolytus of Rome's Commentary on Daniel*, by Hippolytus of Rome, GSECP 79 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2022), 2–8; and Manlio Simonetti, "Hippolytus," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 2:244–48.

[9] On the namesakes of Hippolytus in early Christianity, see J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, part 1, vol. 2, *Clement*, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan, 1890), 370–77. For a list and brief discussion of Hippolytus's writings, see Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1:528–35. For a more in-depth discussion of the writings, including their textual transmission, see Marcel Richard, "Hippolyte de Rome," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique* (Paris: G. Beauchesne et ses fils, 1968), 531–71; see also *CPG* 1:1870–1902; and Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West*, 127–47.

Additionally, scholars have studied various theological facets of the Hippolytan writings, which will aid the development of my thesis (though there is complexity in drawing on this literature as in many cases these works have assumed the unity of the traditional Hippolytan corpus). These include but are not limited to the following.

On Hippolytus's Christology, see John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 1, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 156–62; Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 194–95; Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, trans. J. S. Bowden, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 113–17; Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan (London: Williams & Norgate, 1910), 2:9–11, 256–61, 286–88. In many cases, interest has centered on the arguments against modalist Monarchianism in *Against Noetus* and the arguments of *Refutation of All Heresies* with an eye to what they can tell us about early Christology. For example, see D. B. Capelle, "Le Logos, Fils De Dieu, dans La Théologie D'hippolyte," *RTAM* 9 (1937): 109–24; and Katharina Bracht, "Product or Foundation? The Relationship between the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity and Christology in Hippolytus' and Tertullian's Debate with Monarchianism," *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 18, no. 1 (2007): 14–31.

Regarding soteriology, contributions in this area have highlighted the strong emphasis on deliverance in Hippolytus's thinking (what might be referred to as a "Christus victor" model of the atonement) as well as the expiation of sin, which together reflect Hippolytus's understanding of the kingship of Christ as a merging of kingly and priestly roles in God's redemptive plan. See especially Jean Daniélou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea*, vol. 2, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. John Austin Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 183–94.

As to eschatology, a primary focus has been the relationship of the Hippolytan writings to the millenarian tradition found within early Christianity. Hippolytan studies are especially indebted in this regard to the work of David Dunbar. See David G. Dunbar, "The Eschatology of Hippolytus of Rome" (PhD diss., Drew University, 1979); Dunbar, "The Delay of the Parousia in Hippolytus," *VC* 37, no. 4 (1983): 313–27; and Dunbar, "Hippolytus of Rome and the Eschatological Exegesis of the Early Church," *WTJ* 45, no. 2 (1983): 322–39. For works that situate Hippolytus within early Christian eschatological traditions, see Brian Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 38–41; Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); and Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 60–63. Cerrato provides a more focused analysis of Hippolytus's treatise *On Christ and the Antichrist* in Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West*, 147–60.

have made important observations on Hippolytus's views on church and empire in various works or have helped to frame the subject by drawing attention to other areas of Hippolytus's theological vision. In his study of Hippolytus and the church in Rome in the third century, for example, Allen Brent nuances Hippolytus's negative view of empire by highlighting Hippolytus's distinction between the Roman Empire and the antichrist.[10] In his study of the cultural milieu reflected in the Hippolytan writings, J. A. Cerrato examines Hippolytus's description of the antichrist's "christic imitation and inversion,"[11] but leaves room for further exploration of this theme in relation to church and empire. In his analysis of martyrological passages in the *Commentary on Daniel*, W. Brian Shelton acknowledges that Hippolytus understands the contemporary persecution of his community to be part of a larger battle between Satan and God, but also leaves space for connecting this theme to Hippolytus's views of church and empire.[12]

In her study of Hippolytus's rhetorical strategies in the Daniel commentary, Katharina Bracht has examined Hippolytus's views on church-state relations within the context of his interpretation of Daniel 4–6. Drawing attention to its reflection of a tradition that affirmed the legitimacy of government within a three-tier hierarchy of authority, namely God—state—individual, she also notes how Hippolytus is more cynical of the state than this broader tradition, as he warns against needless involvement with ruling authorities, even in the absence of hostility.[13] Elsewhere, Bracht has also drawn attention to Hippolytus's interpretation of the four kingdoms in the book of Daniel,

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[10] Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop*, SVigChr 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 99–100, 152–54, 330.

[11] Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West*, 130–31, 238–42. This is understandable since Cerrato's main objective is to demonstrate the shared eschatological tradition among Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus.

[12] Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus*, 82, 88–89, 133.

[13] Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift in Danielem*, 260–78.

highlighting the profoundly political nature of Hippolytus's conception of time and history and inviting additional reflection on Hippolytus's view of church and empire within his broader understanding of the divine economy.[14]

Finally, David Dunbar's study of Hippolytus's eschatology also takes an important step forward in engaging the scriptural and theological dimensions of Hippolytus's critique of empire. Noting that of all the church fathers "none offers a more thorough-going condemnation of Rome than does Hippolytus," Dunbar explores the motives behind Hippolytus's view of empire in light of his stress on the non-imminence of the parousia.[15] Dunbar attributes Hippolytus's anti-imperialism to two factors: the recent persecution of the church by Rome and Hippolytus's "eschatological realism." According to Dunbar, Hippolytus's realistic exegesis of Daniel and Revelation generated a mistrust of empire that overshadowed any positive attitudes he might have had toward Rome based on the delay of the parousia.[16] Dunbar's engagement of the topic rightly turns to exegesis as a critical resource in the development of Hippolytus's political imagination, while inviting a more thorough exploration of Hippolytus's interpretation of Scripture in the formation of his thought.

Studies in Early Christian Political Theology

Over the course of the past century, scholarship has grown in its appreciation of early Christian political theology. While the tendency to skip the earliest centuries of the church in tracing the development of Western political thought persists, scholars have

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[14] Katharina Bracht, "The Four Kingdoms of Daniel in Hippolytus's Commentary on Daniel," in *Four Kingdom Motifs before and beyond the Book of Daniel*, ed. Andrew Perrin and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 167–90.

[15] Dunbar, "Eschatology of Hippolytus of Rome," 157.

[16] Dunbar, "Eschatology of Hippolytus of Rome," 161–62. Dunbar subsequently identifies an unresolved tension between Hippolytus's negative and positive views of the state and attributes the determining factor to the ebb and flow of state persecution. But these statements are based on the assumption that Hippolytus authored works now considered to be from a different author.

begun to turn to this period as an important resource for understanding the roots of Christian and Western political heritages.[17] While comprehensive surveys of this period still remain to be written, the political thought of individual figures has captured the attention of historians and theologians, with Augustine, and to a lesser extent Eusebius of Caesarea, garnering the most attention.[18]

Several developments within scholarship have shaped this growing appreciation for early Christian political theology: first, a greater appreciation of the political dimension of basic Christian convictions;[19] second, a greater appreciation of the exegetical and theological frameworks in which early Christian views on the state were articulated; and third, a greater appreciation of the political substantiality of early Christian critiques of empire.[20] It is within these trajectories that Hippolytus's place in studies of early Christian political theology can be situated.

Hippolytus does not feature prominently in early works on Christian political theology, given the approach in those works towards the subject. A prime example is the

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[17] For examples of surveys that neglect this period, see Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, eds., *History of Political Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); and Alan Ryan's *On Politics*, which likewise moves from the Roman political heritage as exemplified by Polybius and Cicero to Augustine's model of two cities. Alan Ryan, *On Politics: A History of Political Thought: From Herodotus to the Present* (New York: Liveright, 2012). The authoritative *Cambridge History of Political Thought*, while not as sparing as these, nevertheless makes short thrift of early Christianity, devoting a single chapter in a lengthy volume on Greek and Roman political thought and a single chapter on Christian doctrine as a source for medieval political thought. Christopher Rowe and Malcolm Schofield, eds., *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, Cambridge History of Political Thought 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and J. H. Burns, ed., *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350–c.1450* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[18] See, among many examples that could be cited, the early example of Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957). The reasons for this are the comprehensiveness of the former's political reflection and the relationship of the latter to Constantine. Additional examples are cited below.

[19] See Geréby's discussion of the "existential turn" within theological studies in György Geréby, "The Nation, the Nations, and the Third Nation: The Political Essence of Early Christianity," in *Theology and World Politics: Metaphysics, Genealogies, Political Theologies*, ed. Vassilios Paipais (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 183–85. The growing interest in political theology is largely due to a growing awareness of the weaknesses of the existential perspective.

[20] See my summary of early Christian responses to imperialism in chap. 5 and corresponding footnotes.

classic study of the history of medieval political theory by A. J. Carlyle and R. W. Carlyle.[21] Their lack of engagement with Hippolytus is unsurprising, given their effort to articulate a mainstream political tradition in the early church that drew inspiration from Stoic philosophy in its emphasis on natural law and political order. Francis Dvornik's *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, one of the most substantial contributions of the twentieth century, also finds little space for Hippolytus as he frames the development of early Christian political thought as a serendipitous shift from millenarianism to a synthesis of Hellenistic political philosophy and Christian doctrine, a shift that could only take place once the literal eschatology of figures like Hippolytus had faded.[22] While he acknowledges that Hippolytus cannot clearly be categorized as a millenarian, he identifies him as a Western holdout of a dying tradition.[23]

Even in the absence of such biases, preoccupation with the broader context of Greco-Roman political ideology has meant that Hippolytus's critique of empire and its place within his theological vision has failed to garner significant interest. For example, Per Beskow's classic study of the doctrine of Christ's kingship in the early church, which employs a philological approach in tracing the development of kingly titles for Christ through early Christian literature, includes the writings of Hippolytus in his study, noting

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[21] A. J. Carlyle and R. W. Carlyle, *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West*, vol. 1, *The Second Century to the Ninth* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903).

[22] Dvornik's downplaying of "millenarian" voices is evident in his conclusions regarding early Christian political theology: first, that early Christians regarded governing authorities as appointed by God; second, that the state, as the state, was not the work of Satan, though the Roman Empire sided with Satan against the kingdom of God, though even then the empire was used by God to accommodate the spread of the gospel; third, that their moral convictions disposed Christians to remain aloof from state institutions and activities because of the way in which involvement would have been regarded as a compromise; and fourth, that their conception of the kingdom of God moved them away from fanatical or violent political action. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, 2:609–10.

[23] Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*, 2:606–7; see also Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. and ed. James Moffatt, 2nd ed. (New York: P. G. Putnam's Sons, 1908), 1:262–63.

his strong anti-imperial disposition in his application of imperial titles to Christ.[24] As with Dvornik and the Carlyle brothers, however, his stress on Greco-Roman philosophical influences overshadows the way Hippolytus's exegetical and theological resources shape his reconfiguration of political metaphors within a coherent theological vision.

Where the theological dimension of early Christian political reflection has been more fully appreciated, Hippolytus's thought remains an open source for further exploration. For example, Erik Peterson makes use of Hippolytus in his classic essay, "Monotheism as a Political Problem," as part of an engagement with Origen's views on church and empire. Drawing attention to a well-known passage from the *Commentary on Daniel*, where Hippolytus decries Augustus's census in Luke 2 as part of a satanic parody of the universality of the kingdom of Christ, Peterson notes how Hippolytus's perspective reveals a deep "mistrust of an empire that claims a universality which only belongs by right to the Church."[25] Peterson's essay, which deeply appreciates the political implications of theology, invites further exploration of Hippolytus's understanding of the divine image in relation to his understanding of empire as a parody of the church.

Fortunately, in more recent decades, interest has shifted to the exegetical and theological dimensions of early Christian political theology.[26] Articles and monographs

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[24] Per Beskow, *Rex Gloriae: The Kingship of Christ in the Early Church*, trans. Eric J. Sharpe (1962; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014). Beskow's references to Hippolytus are dispersed throughout the book. While Beskow's work remains helpful to the topic under consideration, many of his conclusions are dependent on assumptions now widely rejected, such as the sharp dichotomies previously made by scholars between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism, between Alexandrian and Antiochene Christianity, and between the Logos and the incarnate Christ.

My overview of these sources does not, nor should, entail dismissing the formative Hellenistic traditions that informed early Christian political reflection. An example of the value of attending to these is Joshua W. Jipp, *Christ Is King: Paul's Royal Ideology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), which demonstrates how consideration of Hellenistic kingship discourse helps to illuminate Paul's understanding of the kingship of Christ. However, within the field of early Christian studies, Hellenistic kingship theories historically have been the primary lens through which early Christian political thought has been examined, to the neglect of scriptural stories, images, and ideas and core theological convictions.

[25] Erik Peterson, "Monotheism as a Political Problem," in *Theological Tractates*, ed. and trans. Michael Hollerich (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 91.

[26] This trend is reflected in several contemporary articles and monographs that have begun to

on individual figures have been complemented by general surveys and thematic studies of early Christianity that appreciate the role of theology in Christian political reflection. As appreciation grows for the theological-political heritage of the early church, the writings of Hippolytus provide an opportunity to further expand one's understanding of how Christian exegesis and theology has shaped the Christian political imagination.

Significance

In their well-known sourcebook in Christian political thought, Oliver O'Donovan and Joan O'Donovan note that there has been a "consistent underemphasis on the contribution of theological arguments to political thought."[27] My ambition for this dissertation is to partially ameliorate this situation by examining how the early Christian understanding of the incarnation shaped Hippolytus's view of church and empire. While Hippolytus does not offer a comprehensive political theology, his writings help to illuminate the structural foundations of the tradition from which more elaborate political reflection would subsequently develop. My engagement with his writings helps to demonstrate the exegetical and theological resources from which early Christians drew as they introduced a new form of political existence into the world, even at a time when

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draw attention to the role of Scripture and theology within the political thought of particular figures, including Hollerich, "Religion and Politics in Eusebius"; Hazel Johannessen, *The Demonic in the Political Thought of Eusebius of Caesarea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Lunn-Rockliffe, *Ambrosiaster's Political Theology*. Prominent examples of other surveys and general overviews of early Christian political theology that address the scriptural and theological dimensions of early Christian political reflection include Lester L. Field, *Liberty Dominion and the Two Swords: On the Origins of Western Political Theology (180–398)* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998); Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*; Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, eds. *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought 100–1625* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999); Wolin, *Politics and Vision*.

[27] O'Donovan and O'Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, xvi. In his introduction to a volume that explores the intersection of early Christian scriptural interpretation and social issues, Meconi echoes this sentiment from a different angle: "With so much important work being done today in scriptural exegesis, it is essential to show how the ancient Church used the bible in formulating both doctrinal as well as political positions." David Vincent Meconi, ed., introduction to *Sacred Scripture and Secular Struggles* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 4.

state power was off limits to them.[28]

In addition to this, I believe the dissertation helps to clarify Hippolytus's understanding of the incarnation and its central place in his theology, thus making an important contribution to Hippolytan studies. Not only does my exploration of this topic illuminate the internal coherence of his writings, but it also clarifies how he ought to be situated within the stream of early Christian traditions. This, in turn, holds promise for exploration of other areas of Hippolytus's thought.

Argument

My argument proceeds as follows. In chapter 2, I demonstrate how Hippolytus's reading of Scripture shaped his understanding of Christ as the image of God by identifying him as the mystery hidden in the Scriptures and unveiled in his incarnation. I also demonstrate how this way of understanding the relationship between Christ and Scripture serves to inform Hippolytus's understanding of church and empire. I begin by examining ancient evidence and contemporary theories regarding the authorship of the Hippolytan corpus and the identity of Hippolytus. After surveying these, I offer my own working hypothesis based on a growing consensus among scholars. I note, especially, how the works I have chosen to engage are almost unanimously regarded as deriving from the same author, providing a solid foundation for discerning the coherence of Hippolytus's thought.

The bulk of chapter 2 is devoted to a reconsideration of Hippolytus's interpretation of Scripture. Traditionally, scholars have approached this subject by appealing to contemporary distinctions between typology and allegory. While this model, inspired by Jean Daniélou's important insights into Hippolytus's use of types, has served

[28] C. C. Pecknold, *Christianity and Politics: A Brief Guide to the History* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010), 17–19.

to illuminate aspects of his exegesis, it has also underappreciated important elements of his interpretation of Scripture and the theological framework within which it was shaped. I argue that a better framework for understanding the subject is the "apocalyptic reading of Scripture," which better accounts for the various dimensions of Hippolytus's exegesis and the worldview from which it was birthed. After briefly surveying the role of this worldview within early Christian interpretation, I turn to Hippolytus's writings, drawing out his understanding of Christ as the mystery of the economy disclosed in the Scriptures and the reading of the Scriptures as a participation in the mystery revealed therein. I then discuss how this way of reading Scripture informs his understanding of church and empire.

In chapter 3, I demonstrate how Hippolytus's identification of Christ as the image of God profoundly shapes his understanding of divine power. Taking Hippolytus's christological argument in *Against Noetus* as my point of reference, I begin by briefly summarizing and evaluating three different ways in which scholars have interpreted the Christology of the treatise, ultimately aligning my own position with those who have understood it to reflect the inheritance of Irenaeus and figures like him. I devote the remainder of the chapter to tracing Hippolytus's argument in the treatise. In the process, I clarify some of his christological oddities, such as his insistence that the Word is only called Son with reference to the incarnation, and, more importantly, why the two natures of Christ are such an important part of his argument. My argument is that Hippolytus's approach to the controversy reflects a robust theological anthropology that understands the human being as the image of God and that the incarnation, as understood by Hippolytus, is God's completion of his creation of his human image. At the center of God's revelation through his human image is the cross, through which God reveals his creative power through the obedient suffering and death of the Son. It is Hippolytus's basic conviction that Jesus reveals what it means to be God in the way he dies as a human being that necessitated a radical reconceptualization of divine power and profoundly

shaped his understanding of church and empire.

In chapter 4, I examine how Hippolytus's understanding of the cross as the definitive revelation of divine power shapes his understanding of the church. I begin by returning to the centrality of the cross in Hippolytus's understanding of God's self-revelation, arguing that Hippolytus understands the cross as the definitive revelation of divine power because it represents the climactic moment in God's creation of a human being in his image and likeness. As such, the cross becomes, for Hippolytus, the iconic paradigm of the church's life in Christ.

In the remainder of chapter 4, I demonstrate how the cross functions as the iconic paradigm and source of the church's existence. Beginning with a key passage from the *Commentary on Daniel*, in which Hippolytus identifies the church with the heavenly, spiritual mystery typified in the garden of Eden, I demonstrate how he conceives of the church as the eschatological garden in which humanity is brought to perfection through its participation in the incorruptible, spiritual, and heavenly flesh of Christ offered on the cross. Drawing on Hippolytus's mystagogical reflections on baptismal anointing and his use of sartorial imagery from the Scriptures, I subsequently demonstrate how, for Hippolytus, the primary reference of much of his incarnational language is not merely the past event of the cross but the Word's descent in the preaching of the gospel and the church's heavenly ascent in the Word through its participation in him by the Spirit. Through the unity of believers in their participation in Christ's self-offering, the church is conformed to the true humanity of the Son, becoming the embodiment of divine power through martyrdom.

In chapter 6, I turn to Hippolytus's understanding of the imperial ambition to unite all nations under a single ruler, considering his condemnation of empire within the context of his incarnational theology. I begin by providing a brief summary of Roman imperial ideology and its roots in Hellenistic kingship theory and Stoic eschatology, demonstrating how the validation and acceptance of Roman imperial rule was premised

on assumptions about divine power and its manifestation in the world through unity. I then provide a brief summary of early Christian responses to this ideology, noting how Christians consistently assigned to governing authorities a less significant role within the divine economy than that presumed by imperial ambition.

I begin my consideration of Hippolytus's view of empire by acknowledging the legitimate role he assigns to governing authorities within the divine economy. Not only are rulers entrusted with divine authority to execute judgment, but kings also occupy an important role in the typological unfolding of God's plan for creation, serving as figures of the heavenly king, Jesus Christ. For Hippolytus, however, true kingship hinges on acknowledging one's creaturely status and embracing human mortality. As the Scriptures demonstrate, kingship becomes corrupt when rulers reject these realities in their pursuit of divine status. At the root of this ambition lies a distorted vision of divinity—one that that fails to reckon with the cross as the definitive revelation of divine power.

For Hippolytus, this political idolatry represents Satan's renewed attempt to subvert humanity through the false promise of its creation in the image and likeness of God by mimicking divine power through unity. This project will reach its fullest expression in the advent of the antichrist and the "resurrection" of the broken body of the Roman Empire, a perverse imitation of God's creation of humanity in the image of the true heavenly human, Jesus Christ. Rather than elevating humanity to divine likeness, however, empire bestializes those seduced by its false glory. For Hippolytus, empire is not the fulfillment of humanity's destiny but a dehumanizing counterfeit, set in opposition to the true realization of the image of God in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 2

HIPPOLYTUS THE EXEGETE

To grasp Hippolytus's understanding of church and empire as competing images of divine power, it is necessary to appreciate his vision of Christ as the eschatological image of God. In this chapter, I take the first of two steps in that direction by demonstrating how Hippolytus's apocalyptic reading of Scripture profoundly shaped his understanding of Christ as the image of God through its identification of Christ as the mystery of the economy disclosed in the law and the prophets. I begin by reviewing ancient testimonies and contemporary theories related to the Hippolytan corpus before offering my own working hypothesis along with an overview of the writings I engage in this study. In the remainder of the chapter, I turn my attention to Hippolytus's interpretation of the Scriptures. I proceed by highlighting how scholars have tended to engage the subject through the lens of a contemporary distinction between typology and allegory. While appreciative of the insights this perspective has provided, I highlight the weaknesses of this approach and suggest that a better framework for understanding Hippolytus's exegesis is the "apocalyptic reading of Scripture."[1] This apocalyptic framework better accounts for Hippolytus's basic conviction that Christ represents the subject of the Scriptures and, therefore, the starting point for theology. This model also lays important groundwork for understanding Hippolytus's view of church and empire by highlighting how the spiritual ability to discern the mysteries revealed in Christ according

[1] I draw this terminology from John Behr's discussion of early Christian exegesis in his work on the Gospel of John: John Behr, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel: A Prologue to Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 122–31.

to the Scriptures serves as a critical source of identity for the church in relation to its enemies, including those of an imperial character.

The Hippolytan Question

Much of scholarship on Hippolytus has been devoted to sorting out the thorny issue of his identity and writings. Since the late nineteenth century, a variety of theories have been proposed, each attempting to synthesize various data to arrive at a clearer picture of this enigmatic figure. This scholarly project has been complicated both by a paucity of historical evidence and seemingly contradictory testimonies from the ancient and medieval past. In recent decades, three alternative theories have emerged as leading contenders. Before considering these theories, it will be beneficial to highlight what has been gleaned from literary and artifactual evidence.

Ancient Testimonies

The earliest reference to a figure by the name of Hippolytus is found in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Church History*. He lists Hippolytus among the many learned leaders of the church whose letters to one another were still extant. However, he does not provide any details about him beyond the statement that he presided over a church somewhere.[2] Eusebius subsequently provides a list of Hippolytus' writings. In addition to "many other treatises" and "many other works preserved by many," Eusebius specifically names several works: (1) a work on the Passover, which included a chronological table and a paschal canon of sixteen years down to the time of the first year of Emperor Severus Alexander; (2) *On the Hexaemeron*; (3) *On the Works after the Hexaemeron*; (4) *Against Marcion*; (5) *On the Song of Songs*; (6) *On Portions of Ezekiel*; (7) *On the*

[2] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.20.2 (SC 41:119–20).

Passover; and (8) *Against All the Heresies*.[3] A final reference is provided when Eusebius mentions that a letter from Dionysius of Alexandria was sent to the Christians in Rome through Hippolytus.[4]

Chronologically, the next reference is provided in the list of Roman bishops found in the *Chronography of 354* (or *Philocalian Calendar*). It identifies Hippolytus as a presbyter who in AD 235 was sent into exile in Sardinia along with the bishop of Rome, Pontianus.[5] The chronography includes a second reference in its list of Roman martyrs, identifying the feast day of Hippolytus and Pontianus as August 13 and locating Hippolytus's burial place on the Via Tiburtina.[6]

The testimony of Eusebius is largely confirmed in Jerome's *On Illustrious Men*, where he mentions a bishop named Hippolytus but notes that he does not know where his episcopal seat was located.[7] Jerome mentions a number of works, including a reckoning of the paschal feast and chronological tables up to the first year of Severus Alexander, as well as a discussion of the cycle of sixteen years. He also mentions commentaries on Scripture, including the following: *On the Six Days of Creation*, *On Exodus*, *On the Song of Songs*, *On Genesis*, *On Zechariah*, *On the Psalms*, *On Isaiah*, *On Daniel*, *On the Apocalypse*, *On the Proverbs*, *On Ecclesiastes*, *On Saul*, *On the Pythonissa*, *On the Antichrist*, *On the Resurrection*, *Against Marcion*, *On the Passover*, *Against All Heresies*, and a homily *On the Praise of Our Lord and Saviour*, which he

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[3] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.22 (SC 41:122).

[4] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.46.5 (SC 41:163).

[5] Philocalus, *Chronography of 354*, part 13 (*Episcopi Romani*), in *Chronica Minora Saec. IV. V. VI. VII.*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Auctores Antiquissimi 9 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892), 1:74–75.

[6] Philocalus, *Chronography of 354*, part 12 (*Depositio Martirum*), 1:72.

[7] Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 61 (Halton, 87).

delivered in the presence of Origen.[8] According to Jerome, Ambrosius, a convert of Origen, encouraged the latter to emulate Hippolytus in writing scriptural commentaries and provided him with the resources to do so.[9]

An additional reference to Hippolytus is found in Photius's *Bibliotheca* from the ninth century. In this case, the author seems to refer to two different individuals named Hippolytus. In codex 121, he refers to a student of Irenaeus by that name and attributes to him a work entitled *Against the Thirty-two Heresies*.[10] Also in this codex, he refers to the relationship between Hippolytus and Origen, but in this case identifies Hippolytus as the one who so admired Origen that he encouraged and provided him with the necessary resources to write a commentary on the Bible. In codex 202, he refers to a bishop and martyr named Hippolytus and attributes to him a commentary on Daniel and a treatise on Christ and the antichrist.[11] In addition to these testimonies, lists of Hippolytan writings are included by writers from subsequent centuries, including the Byzantine historians George the Syncellus (d. after 810) and Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos (c. 1256–1335) and the Nestorian theologian Ebedjesus of Nisibis (d. 1318).[12] Having surveyed ancient evidence, I now turn to the various contemporary theories that have tried to synthesize what these reveal about the identity of Hippolytus and the Hippolytan corpus.

Contemporary Theories

Following a general outline established by Katharina Bracht, modern research

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[8] Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 61 (Halton, 87–88).

[9] Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 61 (Halton, 88).

[10] Photius, *Bibliothèque*, codex 121, ed. and trans. René Henry (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960), 2:95–96.

[11] Photius, *Bibliothèque*, codex 202, 3:101–2.

[12] For more information on these, see Marcel Richard, "Hippolyte de Rome," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique* (Paris: G. Beauchesne et ses fils, 1968), 532.

on the Hippolytan question can be divided into three phases.[13] During the first phase, the unity of the writings attributed by various authors to Hippolytus was assumed. A crucial event in the development of this perspective was the discovery, in 1551, of a headless statue in Rome, near the catacombs of Hippolytus. The base of the statue included two calendars carved on its sides dating it to AD 222. Alongside one of these calendars was also a list of titles of various works, which partially agreed with the lists of Eusebius and Jerome. The archaeologist and sculptor who discovered the statue, Pirro Ligorio, came to believe that the statue portrayed Hippolytus and repaired it accordingly, adding the head of a man.[14]

The first phase of Hippolytan research was further boosted by the discovery, in the 1840s, of a manuscript containing books 9–10 of an anonymous work later identified as the *Refutation of all Heresies*, traditionally attributed to Origen.[15] However, the details of the newly discovered manuscript, specifically its reference to Callistus, whose death, which likely occurred around 222 CE, is referenced as a recent event by the author, placed the author of the work in Rome during the early third century. This fact, combined with the statue and other references to Hippolytus as a Roman schismatic, led the majority of scholars to identify Hippolytus as the author of *Refutation of all Heresies* and the other works listed on the statue. The narrative of Hippolytus that emerged as a result was most clearly articulated by Johann Döllinger, who presented him as a learned and prolific Roman presbyter who in his fallout with the Roman bishop Callistus led a

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[13] Katharina Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift in Danielem: kommunikative Strategien eines frühchristlichen Kommentars* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 21–27. For a concise summary of the Hippolytan question, see Ulrich Volp, "Hippolytus," *Expository Times* 120, no. 11 (2009): 521–29. For summaries of the various proposals regarding the Hippolytan question and relevant evidence, see chap. 1n18.

[14] Photographs of the statue and its inscriptions can be found in Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop*, SVigChr 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), plates 1–7.

[15] On the manuscript, see Miroslav Marcovich, ed., introduction to *Hippolytus Refutatio Omnium Haeresium*, PTS 25 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 5–7.

schismatic community within the city.[16]

The second phase of the Hippolytan question was inaugurated by the publication of Pierre Nautin's *Hippolyte et Josipe* in 1947.[17] Drawing on an analysis of Hippolytan writings, Nautin argued that the works could not be attributed to a single author but two. Nautin speculated that the first author, a resident of Rome bearing the name "Joseph," wrote the *Refutation of All Heresies*, *On the Universe*, the *Canon* and the *Chronicon*. The second author, a bishop in the East, was responsible for the biblical commentaries, as well as *Against Noetus* and *On the Antichrist*. While facets of Nautin's theory have proven unpopular, his analysis of the differences among the Hippolytan writings provided important evidence for dual authorship.

In the 1970s, the challenge to the unity of the Hippolytan corpus was further substantiated when the epigraphist Margherita Guarducci concluded on the basis of her own examination of the statue of Hippolytus that it had originally been the statue of a woman, whom she surmised was the Epicurean philosopher Themista of Lampsacus, calling into question Hippolytus's relationship to the works inscribed on the throne.[18] This prompted efforts to reassess the Hippolytan question, including Italian research groups that met in 1976 and in 1988.[19] The groups built on Nautin's analysis but modified his conclusions. Especially important were the contributions of Manlio Simonetti and

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[16] J. J. Ignatius von Döllinger, *Hippolytus and Callistus: The Church of Rome in the First Half of the Third Century*, trans. Alfred Plummer (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1876).

[17] Pierre Nautin, *Hippolyte et Josipe: contribution à l'histoire de la littérature chrétienne du troisième siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 1947).

[18] Margherita Guarducci, *Epigrafia greca*, vol. 4, *Epigrafia sacre pagane e cristiane* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1978), 535–45; see also Margherita Guarducci, "La Statua di 'Sant'ippolito,'" in *Recerche su Ippolito*, ed. Manlio Simonetti, 17–30, SEAug 13 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1977); Guarducci, "La 'Statua di Sant Ippolito' e la sua Provenienza," in *Nuove ricerche su Ippolito*, ed. Manlio Simonetti, SEAug 30 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1989), 61–74.

[19] The results of the research groups are published in Simonetti, *Ricerche su Ippolito*; and Simonetti, *Nuove ricerche su Ippolito*.

Vincenzo Loi. Simonetti proposed two authors, both named Hippolytus. The first was an Eastern bishop who wrote the exegetical works along with *Against Noetus*. The second, located in Rome, wrote the other works, including the *Refutation*.[20] Loi sought to demonstrate from the Hippolytan corpus a distinction between two authors on the basis of various differences, including exegetical and theological differences, between the two.[21]

The third phase of contemporary scholarship has included a variety of responses to the two-author thesis. Some have continued to argue for the unity of the corpus.[22] J. A. Cerrato, on the other hand, further developed the two-author theory by locating the Eastern author in Asia Minor. He defended the two-author theory on the basis of historical data and then analyzed the theology of the writings attributed to the Eastern author in order to demonstrate their continuity with the Eastern theology that emerged from Asia Minor. In the process, he also established a strong affiliation between *Against Noetus* and the biblical commentaries.[23]

Allen Brent has offered a more compelling theory that accounts for both the diversity and continuity of the Hippolytan writings. While acknowledging different authors, he suggests that the writings emerged from within the same community in Rome rather than different parts of the empire. He further suggests that the authors of the

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[20] Manlio Simonetti, ed., "A modo di conclusione: Una ipotesi di lavoro," in *Ricerche su Ippolito*, 151–56. For a brief summary of Simonetti's position, see Simonetti, "Hippolytus," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 2:246.

[21] Vincenzo Loi, "L'identità letteraria di ippolito di Roma," in Simonetti, *Ricerche su Ippolito*, 67–88.

[22] For a list of these, see T. C. Schmidt, ed. and trans., introduction to *Hippolytus of Rome's Commentary on Daniel*, by Hippolytus of Rome, GSECP 79 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2022), 5n21. For the argument of Frickel, a leading proponent of the unity of the corpus, see Josef Frickel, *Das Dunkel um Hippolyt von Rom: ein Lösungsversuch: die Schriften Elenchos und Contra Noëtum* (Graz, Austria: Eigenverlag des Instituts für Ökumenische Theologie und Patrologie an der Universität Graz, 1988); and Caroline P. Bammel, "The State of Play with Regard to Hippolytus and the Contra Noetum," *HeyJ* 31, no. 2 (1990): 195–99.

[23] See J. A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West: The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), esp. summary of his conclusions on pp. 250–58.

writings were likely senior and junior colleagues, with Hippolytus, the junior colleague, serving as the author of the exegetical writings and *Against Noetus* and the editor for the senior colleague.[24] With these perspectives in mind, I now turn to my own working hypothesis for the purpose of this study.

A Working Hypothesis

In my judgment, Brent's thesis firmly establishes the Roman provenance of Hippolytus's writings. He rightly challenges the idea that cultural diversity among the writings implies geographical diversity, especially given the multicultural environment of Rome during the Severan dynasty.[25] Brent's thesis, though speculative to the degree that any proposal must be, also has the advantage of synthesizing a broader set of historical data than other theories.[26] For the purpose of this dissertation, therefore, I will assume that Hippolytus lived in Rome during the early part of the third century, having relocated to the capital from somewhere in the Eastern Empire, such as Asia Minor.[27]

While several major theories have been proposed regarding the identity of Hippolytus, a majority consensus has emerged regarding the works that ought to be attributed to the author under consideration. Most scholars now believe that *Against Noetus* and the exegetical writings belong to the same author, and that this author should be distinguished from the author(s) of the *Refutation of All Heresies* and *On the Apostolic*

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[24] For a summary of his proposal, see Brent, *Hippolytus and Roman Church in Third Century*, 365–67.

[25] Brent, *Hippolytus and Roman Church in Third Century*, 367.

[26] See his defense of historical methodology in Allen Brent, "St Hippolytus, Biblical Exegete, Roman Bishop, and Martyr," *SVTQ* 48, no. 2 (2004): 211–14. In my judgment, Cerrato's argument that the Eastern characteristics of Hippolytus's writings suggest he remains in the East has been effectively refuted by Smith. See Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West*, 161–258; and Yancy Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing: Hippolytus's Commentary on the Song of Songs in Social and Critical Contexts*, GSECP 62 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2015), 90–96.

[27] As Schmidt notes, if Hippolytus did indeed relocate from the Eastern to the Western Empire, he would have been following a precedent established by other important figures, including Paul, Justin, Tatian, Hegesippus, and Irenaeus. Schmidt, introduction, 10.

Tradition.[28] Since my argument depends on the ability to clarify the internal coherence of Hippolytus's theology, I will limit myself to the works widely acknowledged as deriving from the same figure, without theorizing about the relationship of this block of writings to the *Refutation* or other works within the traditional Hippolytus corpus.[29] In the remainder of this section, I summarize the works I will engage.

Against Noetus, which is foundational for understanding Hippolytus's theology, is a christological treatise written to address the Monarchian controversy among the Christian communities of Rome during the early third century. While I will discuss the context of this conflict in more detail in chapter 3, for now I note that its exegetical orientation not only serves to distinguish it from the author of the *Refutation* but also aligns it with what are often designated as Hippolytus's "exegetical writings."[30]

Among the exegetical writings that I will consider, the most important is the *Commentary on Daniel*.[31] Written around AD 202–4, during the reign of Septimius

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[28] On the debate as it relates to *On the Apostolic Tradition*, see John F. Baldovin, "Hippolytus and the Apostolic Tradition: Recent Research and Commentary," *TS* 64, no. 3 (2003): 520–42; and Alistair Stewart-Sykes, ed., introduction to *On the Apostolic Tradition* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 22–32. Interestingly, Stewart-Sykes argues that the work was redacted both by the author of the *Refutation* as well as the author of *Against Noetus*. I do not presume to dismiss this theory; however, for the purposes of this dissertation, I will limit myself to those writings whose shared authorship enjoys broader scholarly consensus.

[29] For overviews of the major works in the Hippolytan corpus, see Hubertus R. Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 122–26; Ronald Heine, "Hippolytus, Ps.-Hippolytus and the Early Canons," in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 142–51; Simonetti, "Hippolytus," 246–47.

[30] Hippolytus's exegetical refutation of the heresy of Noetus distinguishes his approach from that in the *Refutation*, which is more concerned to expose the genealogy of heresies. On the latter, see Gérard Vallée, *A Study in Anti-Gnostic Polemics: Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius*, SCJ 1 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981), 47–56.

[31] This commentary represents the first "continuous" commentary on a book of the Bible by a catholic writer, the first ever being Heracleon's commentary on the Gospel of John. For a comprehensive review of the transmission history of the commentary, see Albrecht Dihle, introduction to *Hippolyt Werke: Kommentar zu Daniel*, ed. Marcel Richard, Albrecht Dihle, and G. Nathaniel Bonwetsch, GCSNF 7 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), ix–xlii. On the reception of Daniel in early Christian writers, including Hippolytus, see Katharina Bracht, ed., *Die Geschichte der Daniel-Auslegung in Judentum, Christentum und Islam*, BZAW 371 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007); John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 112; John G. Gammie, "A Journey through Danielic Spaces: The

Severus, the commentary represents a set of catechetical lectures (or perhaps lecture notes) intended to prepare believers for martyrdom.[32] Beginning with the story of Susannah, it highlights the characters of the book of Daniel as faithful martyrs before turning to the visions of Daniel in the latter half of the biblical book. The aim of Hippolytus's interpretation of both the stories and the visions is to demonstrate the meticulous degree to which the experiences of the contemporary church have been anticipated in the Scriptures, elucidating the purpose of the church's suffering within the divine economy, and, thus, giving Hippolytus's hearers confidence and hope in the face of impending death.

Closely related to the *Commentary on Daniel* is Hippolytus's treatise *On the Antichrist*, which represents a compendium of scriptural testimony and reflection about

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Book of Daniel in the Theology and Piety of the Christian Community," *Interpretation* 39, no. 2 (1985): 144–51; Jan Willem van Henten, "Daniel 3 and 6 in Early Christian Literature," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 146–69; Gerbern S. Oegema, "The Reception of the Book of Daniel (and Danielic Literature) in the Early Church," in *The Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins: Essays from the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, ed. Gerbern S. Oegema and James H. Charlesworth, JCT 4 (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 243–52; Reinhard Bodenmann, *Naissance d'une Exégèse: Daniel dans l'Eglise ancienne des trois premiers siècles*, BGBE (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1986); and G. Santagata, "Daniel," in Di Berardino, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, 1:665–67.

[32] The persecution of Christians is referenced in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.1 (SC 41:82–83); and David Magie, trans., *Septimius Severus* 17.1, in *Historia Augusta*, vol. 1, rev. David Rohrbacher, LCL 139 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022), 392–93. Scholars have also identified internal evidence for this date by noting Hippolytus's interpolated description of the image raised by Nebuchadnezzar as the king's own image, which might have been prompted by Severus's demand to be worshiped. See Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift in Danielem*, 57–66; Schmidt, introduction, 9. Additionally, the commentary includes warnings against several figures who had claimed to know the date of Christ's return, which correspond to Eusebius's description of a man who claimed that Christ would return in AD 202. See *Comm. Dan.* 4.18.1–3; 19.1–7 (Schmidt, 148, 150; GCSNF 7:234, 236, 238). Note that GCSNF features the Greek text and German translation on alternating pages; thus, citations in this study refer specifically to pages containing the Greek text. See also Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.7 (SC 41:95). Scholars are divided as to the nature of the persecution of Christians during the reign of Septimius Severus. W. H. C. Frend, for example, found in book 4 of the *Commentary on Daniel* evidence that the "Severan persecution was the first co-ordinated worldwide move against the Christians." W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (1965; repr., New York: New York University Press, 2008), 321. More recently, Marta Sordi has argued against the traditional view of widespread persecution during the reign of Septimius Severus, citing the *Commentary on Daniel's* portrayal of Darius in the story of Daniel and the lion's den as evidence for more localized persecution and a more positive appraisal of the emperor by Hippolytus than has been appreciated. Marta Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 80–81. Sordi's position, however, does not adequately account for Hippolytus's portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar in the story of Daniel's companions and the fiery furnace.

this eschatological figure. Written at the request of a certain Theophilus, it was likely intended for use in catechetical instruction. References to it in the *Commentary on Daniel* suggest it was written at the beginning of the third century, or even at the end of the second.[33] Following a preface that includes important insights into Hippolytus's understanding of Scripture and the incarnation, it addresses its primary subject matter by considering the tribe, manifestation, destruction, and action of the antichrist.[34] The book represents an important complement to the *Commentary on Daniel* and demonstrates the degree to which Hippolytus's eschatology was shaped by the Revelation of John.

The commentary *On the Song of Songs* was likely written sometime between AD 211 and 217, during the reign of Caracalla.[35] Like the *Commentary on Daniel*, the commentary played an important role within the formation of Hippolytus's community. It apparently served as part of a course of instruction for catechumens and recently baptized believers, structured around the three books of Solomon.[36] *On Proverbs* and *On Ecclesiastes* provided a basis for catechetical instruction while *On the Song of Songs* functioned as a mystagogy.[37] In particular, the latter served as a homiletical reflection on the post-baptismal practice of anointing with myrrh-infused oil.[38] As Yancy Smith has noted, however, the Georgian text of the commentary is not as systematic or developed as

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[33] *Comm. Dan.* 4.7.1, 13.1, 24.7 (Schmidt, 136, 143, 156; GCSNF 7:208, 224, 250).

[34] This is the fourfold division Hippolytus gives in *Antichr.* 54 (*ANF* 5:215; GCS 1.2.36). I have used the translation from *ANF* in consultation with GCS throughout this study. English translations are from the *ANF* unless otherwise noted. GCS volumes feature the Greek text and German translation on alternating pages, but citations in this study refer specifically to pages containing the Greek text.

[35] Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 82. Smith's proposal for the date is based on a monetary reference in the commentary that he regards as reflecting the debasement of the denarii that occurred during Caracalla's reign.

[36] Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, xiv–xv. See also Gertrud Chappuzeau, "Die Auslegung des Hohenliedes durch Hippolyt von Rom," *JAC* 19 (1976): 45–81.

[37] Smith explains the distinction between mystagogy and catechesis: "For Christians, mystagogy is embodied, liturgical instruction for new converts following baptism, while catechism refers to instruction previous to baptism." Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 19.

[38] Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, xiii, 2.

one might expect a homily to be. While this has led some to question its identification as a homily, Smith instead argues that the work represents a "set of speaker's notes" intended for use in oral delivery.[39] The notes would have guided expositors through the rites of initiation that coincided with the homilies.

In his introductory remarks, Hippolytus identifies the purpose of the commentary, which is to elucidate by the aid of the Spirit the mystery of the economy that has been disclosed by the Word through types in the *Song of Songs* and that is being fulfilled within the church, which shares in the anointing by the Word.[40] The commentary achieves a figural reading of the Song through the interplay of synagogue, church, and Christ.[41] Along with the first book of the *Commentary on Daniel*, it provides important insight into Hippolytus's exegesis, the paschal liturgy of his community, and his incarnational vision more broadly.

On the Blessings of Isaac and Jacob and *On the Blessings of Moses* represent the first in a tradition of Christian commentaries on the blessings of the patriarchs.[42] Distinguishing between blessings and mere prophecies, the commentaries demonstrate how the incarnate Word, as obedient Son, has received the fullness of the Father's earthly and heavenly blessings while the unbelieving Jews have received upon themselves the

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[39] Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 17–18.

[40] *In Cant.* 1.16 (Smith, 441–42). Smith's edition includes the Georgian text, an annotated English translation of the Georgian text, and several other versions of the commentary in side-by-side format.

[41] As Marcus demonstrates, the commentary *On the Song of Songs* reflects a more positive view of Israel and a more hopeful attitude regarding the church's mission to the Jews than other Christian literature of the time. Joel Marcus, "Israel and the Church in the Exegetical Writings of Hippolytus," *JBL* 130, no. 1 (2012): 392–97.

[42] For more information on these works, see Maurice Brière, Louis Mariès, and B. Ch Mercier, eds., introduction to *Hippolyte de Rome sur les Bénédictions d'Isaac, de Jacob et de Moïse*, PO 27 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1954), iv–xxxix. On Hippolytus's and subsequent commentaries on the blessings of the patriarchs, see Marinus de Jonge, *Jewish Eschatology, Early Christian Christology and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Collected Essays of Marinus de Jonge* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 205–6.

predicted curses.[43] Like the commentaries already mentioned, the volume not only provides invaluable insight into Hippolytus's interpretation of Scripture but his theological framework as well. A final work, which will not play as prominent of a role in this dissertation but will be important for my argument in chapter 5, is Hippolytus's homily *On David and Goliath*, which helps to illuminate Hippolytus's apocalyptic understanding of world history as a cosmic struggle between Christ and the devil foreshadowed in the creation accounts of Genesis.[44]

Together, these works provide a solid foundation for exploring Hippolytus's theological vision. But before turning to Hippolytus's theology, it is important to appreciate the way in which his exegesis shapes his theological methodology and core convictions. In the remainder of this chapter I will summarize how Hippolytus's exegesis has been typically understood and offer a different framework for understanding his interpretation of Scripture that better illuminates his theology.

Frameworks for Hippolytus's Reading of Scripture

Hippolytus's use of Scripture has attracted the attention of scholars over the past century. Interest in this area has been generated by what has been perceived as the unique place he holds within the development of early Christian biblical interpretation. He has been portrayed as a middle way between a more historical form of exegesis reflected in earlier interpreters like Justin and Irenaeus and the allegorizing proclivities of

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[43] This, however, must be tempered by Hippolytus's hope for the salvation of the Jews, which comes through in several places in the commentaries. See Marcus, "Israel and Church in Exegetical Writings of Hippolytus," 397–400.

[44] For more information on the work, see Gérard Garitte, ed., introduction to *Traités d'Hippolyte sur David et Goliath*, *sur le Cantique des cantiques et sur l'Antéchrist*, CSCO 264 (Louvain: Sécretariat du Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1965), i–iv. On Hippolytus as a preacher, see Alistair Stewart-Sykes, "Hermas the Prophet and Hippolytus the Preacher: The Roman Homily and Its Social Context," in *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, ed. M. B. Cunningham and P. Allen (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 47–62.

later figures such as Origen. This way of situating Hippolytus among early Christian interpretive methodologies has colored how the subject has been approached, in some ways leading to further clarity but in other ways obscuring the internal logic of his biblical interpretation and its relationship to other Christian writers. I will briefly survey how this contemporary conversation has developed before suggesting a different interpretive framework within which to understand Hippolytus.

Hippolytan Exegesis in Contemporary Scholarship

The first scholar to devote significant attention to Hippolytus's interpretation of Scripture was Jean Daniélou, who established the categories within which subsequent scholars have tended to approach the subject. In his reflection on the *Commentary on Daniel*, he discerned that the distinguishing feature of Hippolytus's interpretation of Scripture is an expansion of the typology of earlier Christian writers.[45] He argued that this is particularly evident in Hippolytus's "tendency to multiply detailed parallels where the primitive types had been concerned with just one special feature or incident, seen as pregnant with vital significance."[46] It is also evident, according to Daniélou, in the way Hippolytus links scriptural types as part of a single salvation history, constantly relating "individual pieces of typology to a master typology, that of Adam and Eve."[47] Daniélou traces the pattern of this typology through the *Commentary on Daniel*, showing how the overall effect of this approach is to "construct a typological series in which the middle

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[45] For a discussion of typology in early Christianity, see Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 152–57.

[46] Jean Daniélou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea*, vol. 2, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, trans. John Austin Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 265. Daniélou cites the example of Hippolytus's interpretation of the vision of the Son of Man in Dan 7, as compared to that of Justin and Irenaeus. See Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 3.19.2, 21.7; 4.33.1 (*ANF* 1:449, 453, 506; SC 100.2.801); Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 14.8; 31.1–7; 70.1; 76.1; 79.2; 110.2; 114.4; 120.4; 126.1 (Falls, 25, 47–48, 109, 118, 123, 164, 170–71, 180–81, 189).

[47] Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, 267.

term is not only a type of the full reality revealed in Christ, but also itself a fulfilment of an even earlier type in the history of Israel."[48]

In addition to exploring this feature of Hippolytus's exegesis, Daniélou established the parameters for subsequent engagement of the topic by incorporating a distinction between typology and allegory within his assessment, doing so by using Origen as a foil.[49] For Daniélou, Hippolytus and Origen are *the* principal representatives in the expansion of Christian interpretation of the Old Testament, but they go in different directions. Origen was more indebted to Philo and gnostic allegorism while Hippolytus remained more faithful to the traditional typology of Irenaeus and Justin, despite expanding it significantly.[50] In support of this sharp distinction, he cites the overwhelmingly negative references to allegory in the *Refutation* and *Against Noetus*.[51]

Subsequent scholarship on Hippolytus's exegesis has tended to approach the subject by assuming the typology-allegory distinction used by Daniélou. Within this framework, typology is regarded as a mode of interpretation that takes seriously the historicity of scriptural contexts and referents whereas allegory involves a universalizing or interiorizing program that diminishes the historical significance of Scripture. Within this framework, Hippolytus has often been held up as an example of the former. For example, W. Brian Shelton, in his work on Hippolytus's *Commentary on Daniel*, argues that Hippolytus represents a historical-literal method of reading Scripture set against an allegorical method: "Many fathers either ignored or rejected the Old Testament, or

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[48] Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, 268.

[49] For classic studies from two different perspectives on the relation between typology and allegory, see Jean Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, trans. Don Wulstan Hibberd (Jackson, MI: Ex Fontibus, 2018); and Henri de Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, trans. Luke O'Neill (1968; repr., New York: Herder & Herder, 2001).

[50] Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, 257, 270.

[51] Daniélou, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*, 261–62. Daniélou's argument is weakened if the two works were written by different authors, especially if they did not belong to the same community. See the discussion of the Hippolytan corpus above.

employed it for Christocentric prophecy alone, or over-allegorized the text. Hippolytus occasionally allegorized the Old Testament, but in his Commentary on Daniel, he daringly interpreted most of this Jewish text in a historical-literal fashion."[52]

Smith reflects this same dichotomizing approach in his reflections on Hippolytus's typology in the commentary *On the Song of Songs*. While admitting that there is "something of the allegorical" in Hippolytus's understanding of the world, he argues that Hippolytus avoids the dehistoricizing tendencies of other early Christian writers because he understands the deeper meaning of Scripture to refer to the "process of redemption that takes place in the physical world through human history."[53] Smith acknowledges that biblical types, for Hippolytus, reveal the divine economy in both the earthly realm as well as the divine realm, but his perspective suggests a sharp distinction between the two, an assumption that is reflected in his definition of allegorical interpretation as a Platonic preoccupation with eternal truths that do not depend on the events of history.[54] This explains Smith's framing of the divine economy through the lens of a salvation history that proceeds from "creation to consummation" proceeding from Adam and Eve through Israel and then to the nations.[55] For Smith, the narrative of salvation history, unfolding in types, moves from promise and prophecy to fulfillment through history.

Charles Kannengiesser, in his *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, argues for a similar distinction between the historical, typological interpretation of Hippolytus and the interiorizing mode of interpretation of Origen:

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[52] W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus: An Early Church Presbyter's Commentary on Daniel* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2008), 21.

[53] Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 388–89.

[54] Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 388–89.

[55] Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 390.

> Hippolytus excels in the narrative style of a historical and typological exegesis. He is entirely committed to the biblical *historia*, which he usually paraphrases in adding details of his own imagination, able to dramatize or to clarify circumstances. He not so much actualizes the biblical narratives, as he reads into them Christian actuality, namely the gospel event as narrated in the gospels and the apostolic foundations of the church known through the NT. The core of salvation history, the "mystery" for Hippolytus, consists in the transfer of divine economy from the biblical Israel to the "church of the Gentiles." Hippolytus witnesses the "mystery" objectively, in line with the kerygma of church tradition, not subjectively through interiorizing it in reference to the experience of faith (as Origen will do). Thus his typology itself remains narrative, as a part of the paraphrase of the OT, in a concrete, catechetical and homiletic style. His aversion to philosophy and higher learning seems absolute. He could have been inspired by the exegetical initiatives of Melito, Justin and Irenaeus. Because of his lack of rhetorical culture, he remains alien to the allegorism and the Gnostic disposition of contemporary Alexandrian exegetes.[56]

Like the scholars previously mentioned, Kannengiesser distinguishes between a mode of interpretation that honors the temporal, historical dimension of the scriptural record—its horizontal orientation, so to speak—and a mode of interpretation that minimizes or disregards it.

In her reflections on Hippolytus's interpretive strategies in the *Commentary on Daniel*, Bracht distinguishes between historical interpretation on the one hand and typological and allegorical interpretation on the other hand. She notes how the historicity of the events recorded in the Scriptures are important for Hippolytus, drawing attention to his reconstruction of the chronology of events that led to the exile of Daniel and the young men in Babylon.[57] But rather than presenting typology as a figural mode of interpretation that preserves the historicity of the events, she groups typology and allegory as supplementary non-historical forms of interpretation.[58] She distinguishes them from a historical-paradigmatic interpretation that seeks to establish the contemporary relevance of the biblical text by drawing on the figures of the text as historical role

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[56] Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1:532.

[57] Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift in Danielem*, 159–60.

[58] Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift in Danielem*, 159.

models.[59]

Bracht argues that typological-allegorical interpretation plays a subordinate role in Hippolytus's exegesis, serving the ends of historical-paradigmatic interpretation, though it operates more independently in some places. Though she recognizes that, for Hippolytus, the path to knowledge moves from earthly types and images, which possess epistemological priority, to their heavenly models, which possess ontological priority, she downplays any sense of typological "intensification" as Hippolytus moves between typological links, as for example, the link between the garden of Eden and the church.[60]

A final perspective worth mentioning is that of Simonetti. Whereas the views summarized above have situated Hippolytus firmly within a typological, historical stream of early Christian interpretation, Simonetti has argued that a variety of literal and allegorical features characterize his exegesis.[61] While his view appreciates the complexity of Hippolytus's exegesis, his distinction between literal interpretation (by which he means historical, given the examples he cites) and allegorical interpretation does not identify a consistent rationale behind Hippolytus's exegesis that unite these two modes of interpretation in his various writings, instead giving the impression that these merely exist in awkward conjunction with one another.

Scholarship on Hippolytus's exegesis has expanded and clarified the understanding of how Hippolytus interprets Scripture. It has rightly drawn attention to the central role of scriptural types and images within his writings and has established his affirmation of the historical reality of those types and images. However, the contemporary typology-allegory distinction has also tended to obscure important features of his engagement with Scripture in two primary ways. First, it has led scholars to assume

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[59] Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift in Danielem*, 160–61.

[60] Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift in Danielem*, 164–65.

[61] Simonetti, "Hippolytus," 249.

that Hippolytus's interpretation of Scripture moves exclusively from past to future, tracing typological links through a salvation history that moves chronologically. The focus on the temporal, horizontal, dimension of Hippolytus's understanding of types has obscured its ontological, vertical dimension. Thus, his exegesis has come to be conceived as a method for resolving the problem of historical distance between the original context of the sacred writings and his own community. As I hope to demonstrate below, historical distance is not a problem to be overcome for Hippolytus since, within his framework, contemporary interpreters occupy a privileged vantage point from which to discern the meaning of the law and the prophets.

Second, the contemporary understanding of typology has tended to engage Hippolytus's use of scriptural types merely as an exegetical method or literary technique for establishing the contemporary relevance of historical referents in Scripture. The result has been an insufficient appreciation of Hippolytus's understanding of the typological interpretation of Scripture as a means of participating in the divine economy revealed in it. As I hope to demonstrate, Hippolytus's use of types does not represent an interpretive methodology as much as it does a ministry of the Spirit in its witness to Christ in the church.

While scholarship has tended to assume a contemporary definition of typology as an exegetical method and classified and evaluated Hippolytus's interpretation according to predetermined criteria, I hope to bring more attention to Hippolytus's own meta-reflections on the interpretation of Scripture, which are integrated throughout his writings.[62] By considering more fully Hippolytus's own reflections on the nature and

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[62] As Peter Martens has convincingly argued, the contemporary distinction between typology and allegory has functioned within early Christian studies not only as a way to map early Christian exegesis but to exercise judgment over it, frequently failing to do justice to the actual practice and assumptions of early Christian interpreters. Peter W. Martens, "Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction: The Case of Origen," *JECS* 16, no. 3 (2008): 283–317. A classic example of what Martens is responding to is the distinction between typology and allegory in R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources*

reading of Scripture, one can arrive at a better understanding of his interpretive rationale. To adequately grasp his rationale, I will propose another perspective from which to consider his exegesis.

The Apocalyptic Worldview

As an alternative to the typology-allegory distinction, I propose that a better framework for understanding Hippolytus's interpretation of Scripture is the apocalyptic reading of Scripture. In order to appreciate this way of understanding early Christian interpretation, including Hippolytus's, it is first necessary to consider the worldview from which it was birthed, namely that of early Jewish and Christian apocalypticism.[63]

Apocalyptic literature developed as a new and unique phenomenon in Judaism during the Hellenistic period (323–31 BC) and as a response to the imperial ideology of the Successor Kingdoms that followed the reign of Alexander the Great. It drew from the

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and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture (1959; repr., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 7.

[63] The term *apocalypticism* is derived from *apocalypse*, which is ultimately based on the very first word of the book of Revelation (Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Ernst Käsemann's famous claim that "apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology" renewed interest in Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic as a field of scholarly inquiry. Ernst Käsemann, ed., "The Beginnings of Christian Theology," in *New Testament Questions for Today* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1969), 102. The concept of a class of writings under the category of apocalyptic goes back to Friedrich Lücke, who in 1832 was the first to publish a comprehensive study on the topic. See Friedrich Lücke, *Versuch einer vollständigen Einleitung in die Offenbarung Johannis und in die gesamte apocalyptische Literatur* (Bonn, Germany: Weber, 1832). Since that time, scholarship on the topic has produced many debates, not the least of which has been the debate over the meaning of the very term *apocalypse*. In recent times, scholarship has sought to bring clarity to this area of study by discarding *apocalyptic* as a noun and by distinguishing between *apocalypse* as a literary genre, *apocalypticism* as a social ideology, and *apocalyptic eschatology* as a motif found in a variety of literary genres and social settings. See John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 2. With regard to apocalypse as a literary genre, the definition crafted by the Society of Biblical Literature Genres Project has become standard: "a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world." John J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, Semeia 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1979), 9. While accepted by a majority of scholars, the definition has been subject to critique and various proposals for revision (for a summary of other views, see Collins*, The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 7–8). Nevertheless, it continues to be employable, as long as it is acknowledged that the definition does not necessarily apply to any single work as a whole—except perhaps Revelation—but includes features found in parts of various ancient writings. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 3–4. Most important for my purposes is the concept of apocalypticism as a social ideology and theological motif, or to put it more succinctly, an apocalyptic worldview.

eschatology of biblical prophecy while also being nourished from other genres, such as Jewish wisdom literature.[64] As John J. Collins notes, apocalyptic literature is distinguished from predecessors like Isaiah and Jeremiah by the elaborateness of its visual forms, as opposed to the more oracular nature of those prophecies, and by the unprecedented mediation of angelic or heavenly figures through whom visions (or dreams) and their meanings are conveyed to human beings.[65]

This new genre of Jewish literature, with its unique qualities, reflected new ways of imagining the world rather than just a literary trend. As Collins explains,

> The novelty of the apocalypses was not just a matter of literary form. In this case, at least, the genre bespoke a worldview, which I shall call apocalypticism. By "worldview" I mean a distinctive set of assumptions about the way the world works and the destiny of human beings within it. In the case of apocalypticism, the novel aspects of this worldview concerned the way history was conceived, the role of superhuman agents, angels and demons in human affairs, and expectations relating to the end of history and a life beyond this one.[66]

Over the years, scholars have grown in their appreciation of the unique conventions of apocalyptic literature, especially its symbolism. Moving beyond the prior tendency to attempt to conform the literature to contemporary standards of consistency and referentiality, modern apocalyptic scholarship has increasingly embraced the ambiguous nature of apocalyptic imagery and its mythopoetic qualities.[67] Collins has summarized these features first as a totalizing view of history, and second, as a deterministic view of history in which the destiny of the world has been preordained by

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[64] For an argument for apocalyptic literature as a reaction against the Seleucid kings, see Paul Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018). Collins, however, finds the thesis doubtful. See John J. Collins, "Apocalypticism as a Worldview in Ancient Judaism and Christianity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. Colin McAllister (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 21.

[65] Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 7–8.

[66] Collins, "Apocalypticism as a Worldview," 20.

[67] Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 11–13; Benjamin Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians*, BZNW 160 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 19.

God and is disclosed in the form of ancient prophecy, much of which has been fulfilled, thus inspiring confidence in the prediction of things yet to come. The third feature is that of cosmogonic myth that unifies history by linking the creation of the world to its eschatological future. The fourth feature is a cosmological dualism in which the visible conflicts on earth mirror conflicts in the heavenly realm; and the fifth, a predominance of heavenly beings and angels who serve as delegates between God and his people. Finally, Collins notes the granting of unprecedented heavenly access to human beings through visions or by being taken up to the heavenly realms by angelic guide.[68]

The reception of apocalypticism within early Christianity reconfigured these characteristic features in light of the Christ event. One of the key adaptations that distinguished the Christian apocalyptic imagination was a sense of imminent fulfillment. The apocalypse that comes to John is presented in Revelation 1:1 as an unveiling of "things that must *soon* take place" (emphasis added).[69] A sense that followers of Jesus are living within the last days pervades the other writings of the New Testament, across various genres as well.[70] As Collins notes, this reconfiguration centers around the "paradigmatic importance assigned to the death and resurrection of Jesus."[71] For early Christians, the passion of Christ marked the turning point of history, the inauguration of the last days.

In the early apocalyptic imagination, Jesus came to be understood as the mystery hidden in the Scriptures and unveiled on the cross. This idea of mystery—that is, of a secret that was previously hidden but has now been revealed—was central to early

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[68] Collins, "Apocalypticism as a Worldview," 22–28.

[69] Unless otherwise noted all Bible quotations come from the English Standard Version.

[70] See, for example, Matt 24:34; 1 Cor 7:29–31; 1 Thess 4:15–17; Jas 5:8–9, 1 Pet 4:7; and Rev 22:12, 20.

[71] Collins, "Apocalypticism as a Worldview," 32.

Christian self-articulation. For such Christians, the gospel in its apocalyptic mode did not represent a new revelation but an unveiling of the revelation previously given in the Scriptures. This apocalypse, in turn, divided history into two stages corresponding to the time of veiling and to the time of unveiling.[72]

This meant that Christian engagement of the Scriptures was to operate dialogically, beginning with Christ as the subject of the Scriptures while engaging the Scriptures as a testimony to him. As John Behr has argued, what set this tradition apart from figures such as Marcion and movements like those traditionally associated with "gnosticism" was a commitment to understanding and proclaiming Christ *according to the Scriptures*, as opposed to an outright rejection of the Scriptures or attempts to conform the Scriptures to the personal revelations of contemporary interpreters.[73] Behr argues that to grasp how the relationship between Christ, the gospel, and the Scriptures was understood in early Christianity, it is important to remember that Israel's Scriptures provided a "symbolic world" through which the Jews understood themselves and their present experiences. This dynamic is reflected in the Scriptures themselves, given that scriptural writers draw on images and figures from the past to make sense of the present.[74] In turn, this process of "reemploying images to understand and explain the

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[72] See the discussion of the four aspects of early Christian apocalypticism in Behr, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel*, 114–22. Behr highlights the following: mystery, two stages, riddling discourse and messianic secret, and correspondence and two-level drama. For a comprehensive treatment of apocalypticism that centers the role of the revelation of hidden mysteries, see Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982). Rowland argues that the chief characteristic of apocalyptic literature is its "concern with the world above and its mysteries as a means of explaining human existence in the present" rather than the effort to predict future events (p.2).

[73] John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 1, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 17–23. As Frances Young notes, "The 'orthodox' future lay with those who were committed to a text-based version of revealed truth." Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and Formation of Christian Culture*, 57. As Behr notes, the category of "gnosticism" is fraught with problems. Markschies argues that "gnosis" is a better category and offers a helpful typology for defining the movements that can be considered to fall under it. Christoph Markschies, *Gnosis: An Introduction*, trans. John Bowden (New York: T&T Clark, 2003).

[74] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 23–25. As James Jordan argues, if one can speak of a *biblical*

present in terms of the past, and so as being anticipated by the past, which is evident throughout the Scriptures, continues in the New Testament and its presentation of Christ 'according to the Scriptures.'"[75] It was from within the matrix of scriptural terms and images that early Christians sought to understand and proclaim Christ. This was true not only of the writers of the New Testament but early figures such as Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus.[76]

The character of this approach lay in its appreciation of the radically new and unexpected nature of the revelation of Christ in the gospel. The apostle Paul provides a helpful test case. While Behr agrees with scholars such as N. T. Wright when they claim that, for Paul, the apocalypse of Christ is the fulfillment of the original purpose of God's covenant with Israel, he argues that the manner of its resolution was completely unexpected for Paul, having to be given to him directly by the crucified and risen Lord, opening up a new way of readings Scripture.[77] Behr argues, "The proclamation of the death and resurrection of Christ is not straightforwardly derivable from Scripture; rather,

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worldview it is only as a symbolic worldview: "The Biblical worldview is not given to us in the discursive and analytical language of philosophy and science, but in the rich and compact language of symbolism and art. It is pictured in ritual and architecture, in numerical structures and geographical directions, in symbols and types, in trees and stars. In short, it is given to us in a premodern package that seems at places very strange." James Jordan, *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1988), 1; see also James L. Kugel, *The Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[75] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 25.

[76] For an engagement with these three figures, see Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 71–133.

[77] Behr summarizes the typical, historical approach reflected in scholars like N. T. Wright as follows: "In this overarching narrative, one begins with God and his act of creation; the falling away of human beings; and then the long, slow, and patient work of God through the messiness of human history, in a gradually unfolding plan, preparing the way for the advent of Christ, the Incarnation of the Word, whose life is narrated in the Gospels." Behr, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel*, 126. For relevant works by Wright, see N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); and Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 1, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). This perspective has also characterized movements within theological traditions such as the redemptive-historical interpretation of the Dutch Reformed tradition. See Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 131–39. On the similarity between redemptive-historical interpretation in the Reformed tradition and N. T. Wright, see Hans Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), xiii–xv.

the death and resurrection of Christ acts as a catalyst. Because God has acted in Christ in a definitive, and unexpected, manner, making everything new, Scripture itself must be read anew."[78]

In support of this argument, Behr marshals several key passages in Paul's letters, including his words in Romans 16:25–26, where he refers to the "gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation (ἀποκάλυψιν) of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations." He also cites 2 Corinthians 3:12–4:6, and Paul's explanation of how Christ, as the one through whom the glory of God has been revealed, removes the veil that covers the Scriptures. As Behr notes with regard to the latter passage, behind the veil that covers the Scriptures is "nothing other than 'the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ.'"[79]

Thus, the apocalyptic perspective differs from more historicizing approaches in that it emphasizes the profound *re*reading of Scripture that is inaugurated by the revelation of Christ. It is much keener to highlight the "vertical invasion" that the revelation of Christ represents and the way it disrupts prior interpretation of the Scriptures.[80] As Behr argues, within this framework the ultimate goal of the exegetical process is not the interpretation of the Scriptures but the interpretation of Christ:

> It is important to note that it is Christ who is being explained through the medium of Scripture, not Scripture itself that is being exegeted; the object is not to understand

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[78] Behr, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel*, 125.

[79] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 25–27. For Behr's argument from Rom 16, see Behr, *John the Theologian and his Paschal Gospel*, 115.

[80] As Blackwell, Goodrich, and Maston explain, the temporal, horizontal axis was not the only one reconfigured by Christ in early Christian apocalypticism. They identify three axes: a temporal axis, a spatial axis, and an epistemological axis. The temporal, horizontal axis stresses the eschatological dimension, dividing history into two stages (or ages). The spatial, or vertical, axis describes the intersection between heaven and earth. The epistemological axis is concerned with the manner and effect of the disclosure of hidden realities. Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, eds., "Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction," in *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 5–6.

> the "original meaning" of an ancient text, as in modern historical-critical scholarship, but to understand Christ, who, by being explained "according to the Scriptures," becomes the sole subject of Scripture throughout.[81]

Because of this, the apocalyptic reading of Scripture operates in the opposite direction from the historical approach. Within the historical approach, the movement is from Scripture to gospel, whereas in the apocalyptic approach it is reversed. As J. Louis Martyn has explained, "The fundamental arrow in the link joining scripture and gospel points from gospel story to scripture and not from scripture to the gospel story."[82]

Importantly, Behr notes that this point is open to misapplication. He argues that whereas "the gospel is not simply the culminating point of a 'salvation history,'"[83] it also cannot be divorced from the Scriptures. This simply cannot be the case given that the gospel is understood as the apocalyptic unveiling of Scripture. It is Scripture which "provides the words and images in and by which, from the beginning, the gospel is proclaimed and Christ revealed."[84] Thus, the concept of "salvation history" is not entirely negated, but the "starting point for that narrative is in fact the end, Christ and his cross."[85] It is within this framework that I believe Hippolytus's reading of Scripture can be helpfully understood.

Hippolytus's Apocalyptic Reading of Scripture

This retrospective, dialogical reading of Scripture distinguishes the apocalyptic reading of Scripture from the framework commonly applied to Hippolytus's exegesis. In this section of the chapter, my goal is to demonstrate how the apocalyptic reading of

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[81] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 27–28.

[82] J. Louis Martyn, "John and Paul on the Subject of Gospel and Scripture," in *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 216.

[83] Behr, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel*, 128.

[84] Behr, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel*, 128.

[85] Behr, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel*, 128.

Scripture is a better way of conceptualizing Hippolytus's interpretation. Unlike the typology-allegory distinction, it clarifies both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of his exegesis. It also avoids reducing his interpretation of Scripture to a methodology by highlighting the dynamic nature of the reading of Scripture as a participation in the spiritual mysteries disclosed in it.

The Retrospective, Dialogical Reading of Scripture

In considering Hippolytus's understanding of the dialogical relationship between Christ and the Scriptures, perhaps the best place to start is with his hermeneutical reflections in *Against Noetus*. While I will consider these at more length in the next chapter, it is worth briefly summarizing them here. In arguing against the position of the Noetians, Hippolytus recognizes the hermeneutical dimension of the controversy. Both sides appeal to the Scriptures, claiming the authority of holy writ for their positions. Given that both sides appeal to the same authority, how can the dispute be adjudicated? Hippolytus's response is not to appeal to an authority outside of the Scriptures, but to argue on the basis of a proper understanding of the relationship between the Scriptures and Christ. In making this argument, Hippolytus establishes two key points that are essential for understanding his approach to scriptural interpretation.

First, as he explicitly states, there is no other source for knowing God than the Scriptures.[86] The Scriptures occupy an absolutely unique place within God's self-revelation. In seeking to understand the one, true God as he has revealed himself, human beings must not begin with private opinions, speculation, or the writings of philosophers

[86] *Noet.* 9.1, in "Hippolytus: *Against Noetus* 1–11 and 14–17," trans. Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, vol. 1, *The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 66. Unless otherwise noted I utilize this English translation of *Against Noetus*, referred to hereafter as "Radde-Gallwitz." See also *Noet.* 9.1 (Butterworth, 67). I use Butterworth for *Against Noetus* 12–13 and 18. Butterworth includes the Greek text and English translation on alternating pages. My references are exclusively to the Greek text, except where Radde-Gallwitz did not provide a translation. In those cases, I include a reference to both the page(s) for the English translation and the Greek text.

but with the Scriptures.

Second, the revelation given in the Scriptures can only be known if they are received as a witness to Jesus Christ, who is the image of God.[87] Throughout *Against Noetus*, Hippolytus recognizes that while his opponents have recourse to the same texts, their error lies in their failure to discern within them the "mystery of the economy," Jesus Christ.[88] For Hippolytus, his opponents have failed to reread Scripture in light of Christ, assuming an abstracted concept of divine unity apart from that revealed in the person of the Son. Jesus is the starting point for theology because it is Jesus who is the subject of the Scriptures. For Hippolytus, the Christian reading of Scripture, which begins with Christ, thus opens a dialogical relationship in which the Scriptures are known as a testimony to Christ and Christ is interpreted and known according to the Scriptures.

It is within this dialogical framework that the question of Hippolytus's "typology" must be considered. Hippolytus helpfully clarifies the rationale at work in his typological interpretation in a paradigmatic remark he makes early in his *Commentary on Daniel*. In the context of an extended typological interpretation of the garden of Susannah, in which he identifies the church as the eschatological fulfillment of the garden of Eden, he justifies his interpretation by appealing to God's instructions to Moses regarding the building of the tabernacle in Exodus 25:40 (see also Heb 8:5):

> For it is necessary that heavenly things be reflected by earthly things and that spiritual things (πνευματικὰ) be known from models (τυπικῶν) and that eternal things (αἰώνια) be observed from transitory things (προσκαίρων), as God also commanded Moses to make a tabernacle "*according to the model which was shown to him on the mountain*."
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> Now what was that which has been seen, but the images (εἰκόνας) of heavenly

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[87] See also Hippolytus's preliminary remarks in his commentary on the blessings of Moses, where he explains that the divine Scriptures and the prophets are devoted to nothing else but the proclamation of the Savior in order to persuade the generations of humanity. As human beings find faith difficult and are inclined to evil rather than good, the Spirit strives by all the Scriptures to reveal Christ in order to persuade those who hear and read the Scriptures to believe in order that they may find life. *Ben. Mos.* (PO 27:140–41).

[88] *Noet.* 4.5 (Radde-Gallwitz, 62; Butterworth, 53).

> glories and forms, from which [Moses] fashioned a tabernacle from incorruptible wood corresponding to the fleshly representation? This was so that, for those who regard fleshly things, terrestrial things might be revealed, but for those who regard spiritual things, future heavenly things might be revealed (ἵνα τοῖς μὲν τὰ σάρκινα φρονοῦσιν τὰ ἐπίγεια φανερωθῇ, τοῖς δὲ πνευματικοῖς τὰ ἐπουράνια τὰ γενησόμενα).[89]

As already mentioned, Hippolytus's use of types has been recognized as the distinguishing feature of his interpretation of Scripture. The tendency, however, has been to assume a contemporary definition of typology—conceptualized as a historical mode of interpretation distinct from the spiritualizing tendencies of allegory—and apply that model to Hippolytus. What this citation from the *Commentary on Daniel* suggests is that Hippolytus's actual understanding of types fails to align with the modern concept of typology in nearly every way.

First, for Hippolytus, types are not merely literary symbols or patterns but constitutive elements of creation. His definition of them reflects an understanding of the relationship between heaven and earth that is a key feature of the apocalyptic worldview, namely an analogical relationship, or correspondence, between heaven and earth within which the drama of history plays out. The picture of the world within this perspective is, as John Ashton explains, that of a single world "split into matching pairs (rather like the biological theory of DNA) in which one half, the lower, is the mirror image (albeit in this case a distorting mirror) of the higher."[90]

Second, while Hippolytus's ectypal vision of the world includes a historical dimension, it is neither primary nor comparable to the customary way of understanding

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[89] *Comm. Dan.*1.18.2–3 (Schmidt, 46; GCSNF 7:40, 42). I have chosen to refer to "types" rather than to "models" (Schmidt's translation) as it clarifies the exegetical tradition reflected in Hippolytus's interpretation of Daniel. On the other hand, I have chosen to use Schmidt's translation of εἰκόν, "image," since this clarifies the links that Hippolytus makes to the anthropological and christological concepts of the image of God. Chevrons, brackets, and italics within the English text are from Schmidt's translation. Chevrons indicate Greek text suspected of not being original and brackets indicate Greek text that implied in the manuscripts. Scripture citations by Hippolytus are in italics. For more information, consult Schmidt's textual apparatus on p. 36 of his English ed.

[90] John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 327.

the historical relationship between type and antitype. The ontological nature of the relationship between eternal and transitory images means that types cannot be reduced to past events that foreshadow future events. Instead, the relationship is conceptualized as a correspondence between realities that are spiritual and eternal and realities that are fleshly and transitory. This is important because while it does not necessarily establish the chronological priority of heavenly images, it does establish their logical priority within the divine economy, as illustrated in God's instructions to Moses to fashion an earthly tabernacle corresponding to the heavenly model shown him in a vision on the mountain.

To properly understand the historical dimension of Hippolytus's understanding of types, it is essential to appreciate how this vertical dimension intersects with the historical. Hippolytus brings clarity in this regard when he returns to the scriptural reference to Moses and the tabernacle near the end of the *Commentary on Daniel*. As he explains, "Be easily instructed, O man! For the things which happened long ago in the desert under Moses concerning the tabernacle were accomplished as types and images of spiritual mysteries, so that in the end when the truth came in Christ you might be able to apprehend these things which have been fulfilled."[91]

If Hippolytus's first reference to Moses and the tabernacle were to be considered in isolation, it might give the impression that Moses's vision on the mountain represented the definitive revelation of spiritual mysteries. As Hippolytus's subsequent explanation clarifies, however, the vision that Moses received was oriented to the future, foreshadowing a revelation of spiritual mysteries to be given in the last days. As he explains in another passage from the commentary, Moses received a vision of the *form* (εἴδους) of spiritual realities rather than the truth, which has been subsequently revealed in

[91] *Comm. Dan.* 4.24.2 (Schmidt, 155; GCSNF 7:246).

Christ.[92] This means that the types and images corresponding to heavenly realities could not be fully understood until the climactic revelation of those mysteries in the last days. Moreover, this means that the historical correspondence between types and spiritual realities is a dimension that could only be fully discerned once the spiritual realities had been revealed. The vertical invasion precipitates the revelation of the historical relationship between type and reality. Thus, interpretation of types must begin by reading backward from Christ.

As to the other side of this dialogical relationship between Christ and the Scriptures, it is important to note Hippolytus's opening statement in his reference to Moses and the tabernacle, in which he claims that *it is necessary* that heavenly realities be known through earthly types and images. For Hippolytus, types are not left behind once the spiritual mysteries have been revealed in Christ. Types remain indispensable to revelation since the spiritual mysteries have been revealed as nothing other than the subject of the types and images of Scripture. The disclosure of spiritual mysteries does not constitute a supplemental revelation to the Scriptures but the revelation of the mysteries hidden within them.

This principle is especially evident in the distinction that Hippolytus draws between knowledge of Christ according to the flesh and knowledge of Christ according to the Scriptures. Take, for example, his commentary on Song of Songs 2:9. In his interpretation of the appearance of the beloved through a window, he explains that the window represents the testimony of the prophets through whom the heavens are opened so that believers can behold Christ according to his heavenly glory and not merely according to the flesh. He artfully compares this passage to Mary and Martha's search for the body of Jesus in the tomb, explaining that they do not find him there because "the

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[92] *Comm. Dan.* 4.10.2 (Schmidt, 140; GCSNF 7:216).

tomb was not his inheritance, but heaven."[93] Hippolytus questions, "Why do you seek on earth the one who sits exalted upon a throne?"[94] The point that Hippolytus is making is that it is only through the Scriptures that Christ can be known for who he truly is.[95]

It is this conviction that lies behind his comments earlier in the commentary, when he explains how those who did not recognize Christ during his appearance on earth will come to know him through the preaching of the gospel: "For in that time, those who indeed did not know will be given the good news through Christ, and then they will take it into their hearts and believe. 'O, how wise and great is this man, who was not known as God!' Now henceforth, O people, you were made to know the one that before was made known to us."[96] It is through the preaching of the gospel according to the Scriptures that those who did not recognize Jesus when they knew him according to the flesh will come to recognize him as the divine Word of God. For Hippolytus, the revelation of Christ cannot be separated from the proclamation of his identity through the gospel according to the Scriptures.

From the perspective of this retrospective, dialogical reading of Scripture, one can appreciate why Hippolytus does not regard the historical distance between Scripture and interpreter as a problem to be overcome. As those who have received the revelation of the spiritual mysteries hidden in the Scriptures, contemporary interpreters occupy a privileged epistemological vantage point. Hippolytus's typological interpretation, in his

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[93] *In Cant.* 24.3 (Smith, 529).

[94] *In Cant.* 24.3 (Smith, 529).

[95] Bucer has argued that contemporary categories for discussing early Christian exegesis fail to do justice to the early Christian sense of the real presence of Christ in the Scriptures. Suggesting *Christopanic exegesis* as a better designation, he explains the dynamic of early Christian interpretation as "a performative, experientially (liturgically) located exegesis that discerns and affirms the presence of Christ—not a literary reality but an epiphanic 'real presence'—in the theophanic accounts of the OT . . . and in the very act of exegeting such texts." Bogdan G. Bucer, "Christophanic Exegesis and the Problem of Symbolization: Daniel 3 (the Fiery Furnace) as a Test Case," *JTI* 10, no. 2 (2016): 244. On the early Christian belief in the real presence of Christ in Scripture, see Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence*.

[96] *In Cant.* 15.1 (Smith, 497).

own understanding, is not an exegetical method for bridging a historical gap but a rereading of the Scriptures in the light of the revelation of their subject.

Hippolytus, in this regard, is emblematic of the broader Christian tradition in assuming the contemporary relevance of the Scriptures. As James Kugel has noted, the concept of the contemporary relevance of sacred texts was a commonplace in the ancient world and found clear expression in early Christian sources. Citing the apostle Paul as an example, he explains,

> For Paul, as for all ancient interpreters, the Bible is not *essentially* a record of things that happened or were spoken in the past. That they happened is of course true; but if they were written down in the Bible, it was not so as to record what has occurred in some distant past, but "for our instruction" [1 Cor 10:11], so that, by reading the sacred text whose material comes to us from the past, we might learn some vital lesson for our own lives.[97]

The apostle Peter also explains the contemporary relevance of Scripture in this way:

> Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Pet 1:10–12)

Hippolytus is at home in this tradition. He writes, "For the divine writings do not idly preach to us, but their admonition as well as the blessing of these prophets and the demonstration of all things which are spoken by them is meant for us."[98] In his explanation of the contemporary relevance of the story of Susannah,[99] he cites Paul's words from 1 Corinthians 10, claiming,

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[97] Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 16–17.

[98] *Comm. Dan.* 1.7.2 (Schmidt, 32; GCSNF 7:14).

[99] As Tkacz explains, the story of Susannah, originally located at the beginning of the book of Daniel, played a significant part in early Christian imagination, with Susannah being regarded as a type of Jesus. The reordering of the book and the eventual separation of the story from the rest of Daniel contributed to the waning of the perceived significance of the story over time. Catherine Brown Tkacz, "Susanna and the Pre-Christian Book of Daniel: Structure and Meaning," *HeyJ* 49, no. 2 (2008): 182–84.

> [Scripture], through the blessed Susannah, long ago foreshadowed these things for us, so that we who believe in God may now not consider the things which happen in the church to be strange, but instead may believe these things which were foreshadowed long ago through the patriarchs, just as also the apostles says, "These things came upon them as examples, and were written for your understanding, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."[100]

For Hippolytus, the Scriptures are relevant not only because they record the history of God's salvific work in the past but because the mysteries that they foreshadowed have been revealed in the advent of Christ. The church now occupies a privileged vantage point from which to read the Scriptures, understanding them as a testimony about Christ and, by extension, a testimony about the experience of believers in him. To more fully understand, from Hippolytus's perspective, the self-awareness of believers as participants in the mysteries disclosed in the Scriptures, I will now consider how Hippolytus understands the typological reading of the Scriptures as a means of participation in the divine economy.

The Reading of Scripture as Participation in the Divine Economy

Not only does the framework of the apocalyptic reading of Scripture clarify Hippolytus's retrospective, dialogical reading of Scripture; it also highlights his understanding of the reading of Scripture as a participation in the mysteries revealed therein. While the tendency of contemporary models to reduce typology to a methodology has the effect of centering discussion and evaluation of early Christian interpretation around methodological criteria, it is important to note how Hippolytus understands faithful interpretation of Scripture to depend not on methodology but on the spiritual quality of the interpreter. This, in turn, depends on the work of the triune God, the very economy revealed in the Scriptures, in the heart of the interpreter.

For example, at the end of *Against Noetus*, having marshalled the Scriptures in

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[100] *Comm. Dan.* 1.17.6 (Schmidt, 45; GCSNF 7:40).

his argument for the identity of Christ as the Word of God, Hippolytus acknowledges that scriptural testimony ultimately only suffices for those with the spiritual capacity to receive it: "These testimonies are enough for the faithful who practice the truth, though the unfaithful believe none of them. The all-holy Spirit in the person of the apostles testified to this, saying, 'Lord, who has believed what they heard from us?' (Isa 53:1). So let us not become unfaithful, lest the saying ever end up applying to us."[101]

Hippolytus also emphasizes the spiritual quality of the readers of Scripture in his preliminary remarks in *On the Antichrist*. He begins by asserting the authority of the Scriptures, explaining how the blessed prophets "were made, so to speak, eyes for us" given that they "foresaw through faith the mysteries of the word."[102] The prophets were able to exercise this ministry because they were honored by the Word through his furnishing of them with a prophetic spirit.[103] Hippolytus uses the metaphor of a musical instrument to explain the nature of the Word's ministry through the prophets:

> Just as it is with instruments of music, so had they the Word always, like the plectrum, in union with them, and when moved by Him the prophets announced what God willed. For they spake not of their own power (let there be no mistake as to that), neither did they declare what pleased themselves. But first of all they were endowed with wisdom by the Word, and then again were rightly instructed in the future by means of visions.[104]

But just as visions of the mysteries of the Word were revealed to the prophets and concealed from others, even so the interpretation of the testimony of the prophets involves a distinction between worthy and unworthy hearers. Hippolytus strictly instructs Theophilus, the recipient of his treatise, to entrust the words of Scripture and their interpretation only to worthy recipients: "Only see that you do not give these things over

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[101] *Noet.* 17.1 (Butterworth, 84, 85).

[102] *Antichr.* 2 (*ANF* 5:204; GCS 1.2.4).

[103] *Antichr.* 2 (*ANF* 5:204; GCS 1.2.4).

[104] *Antichr.* 2 (*ANF* 5:204; GCS 1.2.4). A plectrum (πλῆκτρον) is a tool used for plucking a stringed instrument.

to unbelieving and blasphemous tongues, for that is no common danger."[105] Instead, Theophilus is to convey them to "pious and faithful men, who desire to live holily and righteously with fear."[106] After reminding him of Paul's admonitions to Timothy to entrust his teaching to faithful men, Hippolytus explains, "If, then the blessed (apostle) delivered these things with a pious caution, which could be easily known by all, as he perceived in the spirit that "all men have not faith" (2 Thess 3:2), how much greater will be our danger, if, rashly and without thought, we commit the revelations of God to profane and unworthy men?"[107]

Furthermore, in the same way that the prophets through the ministry of the Word declared not their own words and spoke not of their own capacity, even so the readers and hearers of the Scriptures must be properly equipped so as not to speak of their own capacity and receive in an unworthy manner. As Hippolytus explains, this requires careful attention to the details of God's written revelation:

> For we do not attempt to make any change one way or another among ourselves in the words that were spoken of old by them, but we make the Scriptures in which these are written public, and read them to those who can believe rightly; for that is a common benefit for both parties: for him who speaks, in holding in memory and setting forth correctly things uttered of old; and for him who hears, in giving attention to the things spoken.[108]

Such an important task cannot be conducted apart from a sincere faith on the part of both reader and hearer. Hippolytus exhorts, "Since, then, in this there is a work assigned to both parties together, viz., to him who speaks, that he speaks forth faithfully without

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[105] *Antichr.* 1 (*ANF* 5:204; GCS 1.2.4).

[106] *Antichr.* 1 (*ANF* 5:204; GCS 1.2.4).

[107] *Antichr.* 1 (*ANF* 5:204; GCS 1.2.4). Cerrato uses this passage to argue that the treatise was likely used as a resource for baptismal catechesis. He suggests that Hippolytus's instructions to Theophilus represent an example of the *disciplina arcani*, the "intentional reservation and sense of secrecy surrounding early Christian baptismal teachings." J. A. Cerrato, "Hippolytus and Cyril of Jerusalem on the Antichrist: When Did an Antichrist Theology First Emerge in Early Christian Baptismal Catechesis?," in *Apocalyptic Thought In Early Christianity*, ed. Robert J. Daly (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 157.

[108] *Antichr.* 2 (*ANF* 5:205; GCS 1.2.5).

regard to risk, and to him who hears, that he hear and receive in faith that which is spoken, I beseech you to strive together with me in prayer to God."[109]

For Hippolytus, the spiritual capacity to understand the revelation of spiritual mysteries in the Scriptures is not ultimately the result of human effort but the work of the Father through his Word and Spirit. This is evident in several of the preliminary comments he makes in his commentaries. For example, in *On the Song of Songs*, he begins by explaining how it is through the ministry of the Word and the Spirit that Solomon's Song reveals the divine economy to those able to receive it in faith. It was through the guidance of the Spirit and the Word that "dwelt with him" that Solomon was able to testify to the threefold economy of Father, Son, and Spirit through his three works (Prov, Eccl, and Song).[110] It was the Word, who is himself Wisdom, who cried out through Solomon and revealed what the Father desires to give to the prophets, namely a revelation of the Son, Jesus Christ, who is himself the Wisdom of God who cried out through Hippolytus, an identification based on the apostle Paul's own identification of Christ as the Wisdom of God: "But we preach Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:23).[111]

The ministry of the Father through his Word and Spirit is not limited to the inspiration of the Scriptures, however, but extends to their interpretation as well. Thus, Hippolytus explains how the divine economy disclosed in types in the Scriptures is revealed through the illumination of the Spirit in the church: "Now the Spirit sings what has been ordained in the church, since in various portions it reveals to us the economy in

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[109] *Antichr.* 2 (*ANF* 5:205; GCS 1.2.5).

[110] *In Cant.* 1.1–3 (Smith, 420–21). These books, which form a unity, make known the Father as "wonderful and a wealth of wisdom," the Son as the one through whom the earth, as a synagogue of darkness, is known and the "gloom of this world was comprehended," and the Holy Spirit as the giver of joy and consolation (1.5 [Smith, 424]).

[111] *In Cant.* 1.6, 8 (Smith, 427); cf. 1 Cor 1:23–24.

types which we must declare to those who are able to listen with faith."[112] Within the historical unfolding of types and images, the church occupies a privileged place, marked out by the Spirit as the body of the faithful to whom the mystery of the Scriptures has been disclosed.[113]

Hippolytus reiterates this point in his preamble to his commentary *On the Blessings of Isaac and Jacob*, where he emphasizes the interpreter's dependence on the illuminating ministry of the Word, who must become the interpreter of his own words in order for readers to understand the spiritual mysteries conveyed in the Scriptures:

> Who, indeed, among human beings is able to narrate what has been spoken in a spiritual sense (τὰ πνευματικῶς εἰρημένα) if the heavenly Wisdom (οὐράνιος σοφία) does not collaborate (συνεργεῖ) with him while he speaks? And who can interpret what was spoken by the blessed prophets in the dark through parables (διὰ παραβολῶν αἰνιγματωδῶς) if the Word himself does not become his own interpreter? That Word—which in ancient days in Israel, in the time of the law, was hidden like a lamp under the bushel in order to illuminate those who were, in the time of the law, justified through circumcision—now, in our own time is revealed on the wood in a language that speaks to all like a lamp with seven branches on a candlestick in order to call distant nations to salvation through its own light.[114]

The Heavenly Wisdom, whom Hippolytus identifies as the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, is the one who has spoken through the prophets. Yet the Word has spoken

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[112] *In Cant.* 1.16 (Smith, 441–42).

[113] Smith helpfully captures the spirit of this exegesis in *On the Song of Songs*, contrasting Hippolytus's perspective with that of the Valentinians, for whom the "story behind the story replaced the story of Scripture entirely." He explains,

> In contrast, Hippolytus' commentary *On the Song of Songs* approached the Old Testament text as a source granting access to multiple levels of reference: to realities of the past, and of their own time as well as the future. Hippolytus searches the Scriptures for images, events, and patterns that prophetically indicate that present-future—or, the revelation of the mystery. The types tell a story of divine grace revealed in both the earthly, physical realm as well as the divine sphere. Yet the relationship of deferral from type to antitype is essentially unpredictable and mysterious. Hippolytus finds a revelation of the mystery in the gospel events and the history of the church. These are the keys that unlock the mystery, but only in retrospect. It is the dogged retention of the central importance of the historical, the mystery's relation to the physical and earthly that separates Hippolytus from his gnostic, Valentinian Christian counterparts. The story of Scripture is enhanced and interpreted—but never replaced—by means of the Logos story behind the biblical story. (Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, xxiii–xxiv)

Smith's insights, especially regarding the unpredictability and retrospective direction of Hippolytus's exegesis, reinforce the apocalyptic framework evident in his interpretation of the Scriptures.

[114] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 1 (PO 27:3).

cryptically, concealing the spiritual sense of the prophetic testimony in the form of parables. This being the case, it is only the Word who can interpret the spiritual mysteries by becoming a collaborator with interpreters of Scripture. Furthermore, this collaboration has awaited the advent of Christ because it is only in the passion of the cross, proclaimed to the nations through the gospel, that the bushel is removed, and the light of the Word is revealed. Through the illumination of the Word, believers come to recognize the Word's revelation on the cross as the subject of the Scriptures, unlocking the riddling words of the prophets that had been kept under the bushel in the time of the law.[115]

For Hippolytus, the capacity to understand the spiritual mysteries disclosed in the Scriptures depends on an interpreter's own participation in those mysteries. It is as participants in the apocalyptic event of the gospel that readers come to know the mysteries revealed in the apocalyptic unveiling of the Scriptures. This interplay between Scripture and its interpreters is nowhere more evident than in Hippolytus's comments on the prophecy of the seventy weeks in Daniel, specifically the description of the seventy weeks as a time to "seal dream and prophet."[116] Hippolytus understands this not merely as a reference to the visions of Daniel but to all the Scriptures. Appealing to Matthew 11:13, he explains,

> For after the fullness of the law and the prophets he himself has come, "for the law and the prophets were until John," so it is necessary that the things which were spoken by them be sealed, so that at the advent of the Lord all things which have been loosed and [all] things which have been sealed may be brought to light, and

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[115] Hippolytus reflects a characteristic trait of early Christian interpretation, which understood that the inspiration of Scripture cannot be separated from its interpretation. As Behr summarizes,

> The divinely inspired content of Scripture is not known until the books are opened by the cross of Christ, and so their "inspiration" cannot be separated from the act of opening nor, for that matter, from the inspired reading: the "inspired" writing of Scripture cannot be separated from the "inspired" reading, and both, together, turn upon the act of opening the Scriptures by the one of whom they speak, or, in reverse, the one who speaks in them. (Behr, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel*, 128)

[116] For a brief treatment of Hippolytus's use of the apocalyptic themes in Daniel, see Sten Hidal, "Apocalypse, Persecution, and Exegesis: Hippolytus and Theodoret of Cyrrhus on the Book of Daniel," in *In the Last Days: On Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic and its Period*, ed. Knud Jeppesen, Kirsten Nielsen, and Bent Rosendal (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1994): 49–53.

> what was not able to be made known may easily be perceived, and that which was bound long ago now may be loosed by him.[117]

For Hippolytus, what was spoken by the law and the prophets had been sealed until the advent of Christ. As he subsequently explains, John's vision in Revelation 5 identifies Christ as the one who loosens what has been bound: "Yet he did not say 'Seal,' to Christ, but, 'Loose what was bound long ago,' so that through his grace we may recognize the will of the Father and we may believe in him whom he sent, Jesus Christ our Lord, for the salvation of men."[118]

But what Hippolytus has in mind when he refers to the bringing to light of "all things which have been loosed and [all] things which have been sealed" in the opening of the Scriptures through the coming of Christ are not the Scriptures alone but their readers. This is evident in the way he immediately follows this statement with a reference to Jesus's discussion with the rulers of the Jews concerning his deliverance of a woman on the Sabbath who had been bound by Satan for eighteen years. Hippolytus understands this as paradigmatic for all those who have been delivered by Christ.[119] He argues, "And so as many as Satan has bound and ensnared, when the Lord came he loosed them from the bonds of death, binding the strong one who was against us, and freeing humanity."[120] For Hippolytus, this loosing of humanity from the binding of Satan is itself part of the mystery revealed in Christ and also the means by which those who have been loosed come to understand the mystery through participation in it. It is through the liberation of those bound by Satan that Christ has taken the book and loosed it "so that what was spoken long ago secretly concerning him, now may be preached with boldness upon the

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[117] *Comm. Dan.* 4.33.2 (Schmidt, 166; GCSNF 7:272).

[118] *Comm. Dan.* 4.34.4 (Schmidt, 168; GCSNF 7:276).

[119] Given the subsequent contrast between the Pharisees and the saints, Hippolytus seems to take this woman specifically as a figure of the church.

[120] *Comm. Dan.* 4.33.4 (Schmidt, 166; GCSNF 7:272).

rooftops."[121]

On the other hand, the revelation of the mysteries in Christ also brings to light those who remain bound by Satan through their rejection of Christ as the subject of the Scriptures. Thus, Hippolytus understands the prophecy of Isaiah 49:9, in which a scribe is described as unable to read the sealed book, to be fulfilled in the unbelieving Pharisees:

> For it is absolutely necessary that what was spoken long ago through the prophets be sealed to the unbelieving Pharisees, who pretended to know the letters of the law, and that all of it instead be open to those who believe. And so everything which has been sealed long ago now through the grace of the Lord, has been opened to the saints. For he himself was a perfect seal and "the key of David who opens and no one shuts, and who shuts and no one opens" (Rev 3:7).

For Hippolytus, this means that the inspiration of Scripture cannot be separated from its reading. The work of the Spirit in disclosing the mystery of the economy extends beyond the inspiration of the writers of the Scriptures to include those who read them as part of the community that confesses the truth revealed in them. To further illustrate Hippolytus's understanding of the participatory nature of scriptural interpretation, as well as the retrospective, dialogical dimension of his exegesis, I will turn to an important segment from his *Commentary on Daniel*.

The Apocalyptic Reading of Scripture: A Case in Point

Hippolytus's interpretation of the visions of Daniel 10–12 has the advantage of bringing together the various dynamics of his exegesis I have been discussing. Not only does it highlight the advent of Christ, and in particular the cross, as the subject of the Scriptures, but it also reiterates Hippolytus's conviction that one can only understand the mysteries revealed through Christ by a participation in his saving work on the cross.

The vision at the beginning of Daniel 10 comes during a period of fasting and mourning that overlaps with the date for the festival of Passover. During this time, Daniel

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[121] *Comm. Dan.* 4.34.3 (Schmidt, 168; GCSNF 7:276).

is said to have prayed for a revelation of mysteries from God. On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, at the completion of his fast, while Daniel is standing on the bank of the "great river," he receives a vision of a "man clothed in a multicolored garment."[122] In his identification of the figure, Hippolytus notes how that whereas the vision described in Daniel 9 specified that it was the angel Gabriel who came to Daniel (Dan 9:21), in this case it is Jesus that appears to Daniel, not in the fullness of his humanity but in the form of the humanity that one would assume: "he sees the Lord himself, not yet perfectly man (τελείως ἄνθρωπον), but appearing in the shape of a man (ἐν δὲ σχήματι ἀνθρώπου φαινόμενον) just as he says."[123] For Hippolytus, the vision of the heavenly human being does not represent an appearance of a pre-incarnate Word but a revelation of the mystery revealed in the incarnation:

> For the Word of God was proclaimed beforehand as a man through the figure of a man, being displayed in the world as an incarnate man, though not yet then [actually] being a son of man. "But when the fullness of time came, God sent his son, born of a woman," so that the Son of God may put on humanity from the Virgin and may be demonstrated as being Son of God and Son of Man.[124]

But Jesus is not only the object of the vision but also the one through whom the vision is delivered. Noting how the vision functions as the personal testimony of the Word to himself, Hippolytus identifies Jesus as both message and messenger: "He who appeared to Daniel was truth and he proclaimed truth. He himself as truth was revealed in the world and teaches truth—O blessed disciples who are taught by Christ!"[125]

As with the vision in Daniel 9, Hippolytus takes this as paradigmatic for the relationship between Christ and the Scriptures. In Daniel 12:5–7, after the man in the vision delivers prophecies to Daniel, two figures appear with the man and ask him,

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[122] As cited in *Comm. Dan.* 4.36.5 (Schmidt, 169; GCSNF 7:280).

[123] *Comm. Dan.* 4.36.5; 39.3 (Schmidt, 169–70, 172; GCSNF 7:280, 284).

[124] *Comm. Dan.* 4.39.5 (Schmidt, 172; GCSNF 7:284, 286), citing Gal 4:4.

[125] *Comm. Dan.* 4.41.1 (Schmidt, 174; GCSNF 7:288).

"When will be the end of the wondrous words which you have spoken?"[126] After citing the man's answer, Hippolytus turns to the question of the identity of the two figures, explaining, "And so, who were the two men who were standing alongside the bank of the river except the law and the prophets?"[127] Hippolytus's identification of the two figures echoes the prophetic inquiries described by the apostle Peter: "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories" (1 Pet 1:10–11). Hippolytus explains that the two figures inquire this of Christ because he is the one about whom they have foretold in times past:

> And who was the one who stood above the water except that very same one about whom they themselves foretold long ago, who was destined to be visibly testified by the Father at the Jordan in the end and to be shown to the people in openness by John, who carries the quill of a scribe and linen around [his] loins and is dressed with a multicolored tunic?[128]

In identifying Christ as the subject of the Scriptures, Hippolytus links the river setting of Daniel's vision to the public manifestation of Christ at his baptism in which the witness of John as the greatest of the prophets is joined with the witness of the Father through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. For Hippolytus, while the baptism of Jesus identifies him as the Son who shares in the rule of the Father, it does not represent the definitive sign of the fulfillment of God's purposes. He goes on to explain how the law and the prophets, "seeing that to him was given all rule and authority, asked him that they might understand exactly from him when he is about to bring judgment to the world and when what was spoken by him shall be fulfilled."[129] In reply, the man, "wishing to

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[126] *Comm. Dan.* 4.56.1 (Schmidt, 190; GCSNF 7:326), citing Dan 12:6.

[127] *Comm. Dan.* 4.56.2 (Schmidt, 190; GCSNF 7:326).

[128] *Comm. Dan.* 4.56.3 (Schmidt, 190–91; GCSNF 7:326).

[129] *Comm. Dan.* 4.56.5 (Schmidt, 191; GCSNF 7:326).

persuade them in every way, raised his right hand and his left hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever."[130] In explaining this part of the vision, Hippolytus explains that it is the Son who is indicated as swearing by the Father, and that the sign he gives that what has been spoken by the law and the prophets will be fulfilled is his outstretched hands, indicating the passion of the Son on the cross. The cross is, for Hippolytus, the definitive moment of revelation because it marks the fulfillment of the economy of God disclosed in the Scriptures.[131]

But the revelation of the cross cannot be grasped as a neutral observer. In his earlier comments on the vision, Hippolytus notes how Daniel's initial response to the vision of the man is to be terrified and to fall to the ground. The response of the heavenly man to Daniel's weakness, in which he is described as touching Daniel three times, is for Hippolytus, filled with theological meaning. First, Daniel is said to be touched as if with the hand of a man and then subsequently to be touched by one with the appearance of a son of man. Hippolytus understands these as veiled references to the incarnation, the first touch revealing the incarnation in part, and the second touch revealing the incarnation in its fullness (καθ' ὅλου ἐνανθρώπησιν). Following the second touch, Daniel opens his mouth and explains, "Lord in your appearance my insides were turned within me and I have no strength."[132] What seems like a straightforward metaphorical description of Daniel's physical response to the vision takes on a much more significant meaning in Hippolytus's interpretation: "For it is necessary that at the advent of the Lord the things which are above may come below so that the things which are below might be able to

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[130] *Comm. Dan.* 4.56.5 (Schmidt, 191; GCSNF 7:326).

[131] On the centrality of the cross in Hippolytus's understanding of salvation, see Antonio Zani, *La Cristologia di Ippolito*, Ricerche di Scienze Teologische 22 (Brescia, Italy: Morcelliana, 1984), 471–610.

[132] As cited in *Comm. Dan.* 4.39.6 (Schmidt, 172; GCSNF 7:286).

come above."[133] What Hippolytus means by this is subsequently explained through his exposition of the third touch:

> "And he came close," he says, "and as [with] an appearance of a man he touched me and he strengthened me and he said to me, 'Do not fear, man of desires. Peace be to you, be strong like a man.'" For when all the strength and glory of our life has passed away, then we are empowered by the outstretched hand of Christ, who also raises us as the living from the dead and from Hades to the resurrection of life.[134]

For Hippolytus, the description of the touching of Daniel by the heavenly man is the story of the incarnation in miniature, and his description of the significance of the cross highlights why it occupies the central place in God's self-revelation. Not only does the cross represent the definitive revelation of the spiritual mysteries disclosed in the Scriptures but it also represents the means by which human beings can come to know and testify to that revelation, becoming participants in the revealed mysteries through the power of the cross.

Thus, in his climactic comments at the end of the *Commentary on Daniel*, Hippolytus summarizes the import of his observations on the two visions for his understanding of the relationship between Christ and the Scriptures. Addressing his listeners, he explains,

> Now behold, O man (ὦ ἄνθρωπε), what was sealed long ago and was not able to be known in openness, is now preached on the rooftops and the Book of Life, which has already clearly been opened, opens wide on the wood [of the cross], having an inscription written in Latin and Greek and Hebrew, so that also the Romans and Greeks and Hebrews may be taught. This is so that, as men expect the coming good things, they may believe what was written in this Book of Life which also was preached in the whole world and, when they learn of the coming evils, after they have become fearful of the judgment, they might flee the eternal punishment, in order that all may be found worthy of the kingdom.[135]

Or, as Hippolytus explains in the commentary *On the Song of Songs*, "For just

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[133] *Comm. Dan.* 4.39.6 (Schmidt, 172; GCSNF 7:286); cf. *In Cant.* 13.4 (Smith, 494–95).

[134] *Comm. Dan.* 4.39.7 (Schmidt, 173; GCSNF 7:286).

[135] *Comm. Dan.* 4.59.2 (Schmidt, 193–94; GCSNF 7:332).

as, beloved, the aroma is wafted from an apple tree more than that of all the fruits, so also is Christ among all the prophets suspended on the wood was (*sic*) sending forth an aroma like [that of] the apple tree."[136]

As I will explore in the following chapter, this approach to the Scriptures profoundly shapes Hippolytus's understanding of how God has revealed himself in Christ. But before turning attention to that subject, it is beneficial to highlight how this discussion of Hippolytus's exegesis is already implicated in his understanding of church and empire. Before concluding, therefore, I will consider how Hippolytus's apocalyptic understanding of Scripture lays the foundation for how he understands the basic distinction between church and empire.

Church and Empire in the Apocalyptic Reading of Scripture

This reflection on Hippolytus's apocalyptic reading of Scripture is not only important because of how it clarifies his understanding of Scripture and his approach to its interpretation. It is also important because it is central to Hippolytus's understanding of the relationship between church and empire. As already noted above, apocalyptic literature emerged from within the political context of developing empires. As such, it functioned as an important resource for the self-identity of the Jewish people. As apocalypticism was extended in the early Christian movement, it also became central to early Christian identity over against the enemies of the church, including the Roman Empire.

As I have demonstrated above, the apocalyptic unveiling of the Scriptures through the preaching of the cross is an event that not only illuminates the law and the prophets but also serves to distinguish between two communities: those to whom the

[136] *In Cant.* 18.2 (Smith, 506).

mysteries have been revealed and those to whom they remain concealed. Furthermore, given that it is as participants in those mysteries that human beings come to understand them through the Scriptures, the distinction between the two communities corresponds to those who have been liberated from the bondage of Satan through participation in the cross of Christ and those who remain bound by him. The apocalypse of the cross, then, is a manifestation of divine judgment, a moment of social and political clarification, distinguishing between two societies and their respective masters.

The church's self-identification as those to whom and about whom the Scriptures have been written is, for Hippolytus, a crucial aspect of its identity and a necessary feature of its perseverance in persecution. This theme is especially prominent in Hippolytus's *Commentary on Daniel*, in which he traces the story of the church through the stories and visions of Daniel, demonstrating how meticulously the Spirit has prefigured the church's experience in the Scriptures.[137] Within this context, the failure of the enemies of God to discern the dispensation of the Spirit becomes an important part of how believers reckon with their own persecution.[138]

For example, Daniel's judgment between Susannah and the wicked elders not only serves to identify Daniel with the heavenly judge, Christ, but is recorded in order that "the chosen race of the righteous may be manifested to all and the chastity of the

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[137] See especially, *Comm. Dan.* 1.21.2–3 (Schmidt, 50; GCSNF 7:48); and 3.31.2–3 (Schmidt, 128; GCSNF 7:188, 190). Hippolytus expresses his typological meticulousness in this way: "And so since the blessed Daniel described the vision to the king and was not silent about its interpretation, a line of inquiry remains for those who possess a keen mind, so that, again, what was spoken by Daniel may be explained by others. Yet it is necessary for the lovers of truth to inquire precisely (ἀκριβῶς) and not, by merely reading cursorily, to consider what was spoken by the prophets to be obscure." *Comm. Dan.* 2.11.1–2 (Schmidt, 70; GCSNF 7:84, 86); cf. *Comm. Dan.* 1.2.1; 4.36.1 (Schmidt, 28, 169; GCSNF 7:4, 278).

[138] Trakatellis has argued that the *Commentary on Daniel* represents a kind of exegesis that John Chrysostom (referring to his own exegesis) would later call λόγος ἀγωνιστικός. See Demetrios Trakatellis, "'ΛΟΓΟΣ ΑΓΩΝΙΣΤΙΚΟΣ: Hippolyt's Commentary on Daniel," in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi*, ed. Lukas Bormann, Kelly del Tredici, and Angela Standhartinger (New York: Brill, 1994), 527–50. For Trakatellis, it is Hippolytus's heightened awareness of opponents and an evangelistic mentality that marks the exegesis of the commentary in this way.

blessed Susannah may be clearly shown and the righteous and holy prophet Daniel may be demonstrated as a new prophet to the people."[139] Meanwhile, the elders, blinded by their own wickedness, are said to have failed to discern the "power of the Word in [Daniel],"[140] a blindness recapitulated, according to Hippolytus, among the leaders of the Jews in his own time who fail to see within the story of Susannah "the dispensation of the Spirit."[141]

In the story of Daniel's companions, it is the ability of the young men to discern themselves as the subject of the Scriptures that enables them to endure the hostility of Nebuchadnezzar: "These [boys], having read the text [of Scripture], saw that what was spoken by the prophet was written concerning them! For how else did the text say to Babylon, 'I shall make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those who know me,' except if it foresees by the Spirit the mystery of the dispensation there?"[142] It is through recognition of the mystery of the dispensation concealed in the Scriptures that the young men come to recognize their own experience as the fulfillment of the stories of salvation given in the prophetic writings.[143] On the basis of this revelation, they are able to endure: "For these [boys], having seen all men worshiping the image and heeding the prescription of the king, settled their minds, saying, 'This is not idly written, brothers, this is similarly fulfilled in us now.'"[144]

Hippolytus's apocalyptic understanding of Scripture is also crucial to his

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[139] *Comm. Dan.* 1.1.5 (Schmidt, 28; GCSNF 7:4).

[140] *Comm. Dan.* 1.29.3 (Schmidt, 57; GCSNF 7:60).

[141] *Comm. Dan.* 1.15.2 (Schmidt, 42; GCSNF 7:34).

[142] *Comm. Dan.* 2.19.1 (Schmidt, 75; GCSNF 7:96); cf. Ps 87:4 (LXX 86:4).

[143] *Comm. Dan.* 2.19.3–8 (Schmidt, 76; GCSNF 7:96, 98). As Hippolytus subsequently explains, it is through the Scriptures that the Spirit of the Father strengthens the martyrs, granting them a share in heavenly power (2.21.1–2 [Schmidt, 77; GCSNF 7:98]).

[144] *Comm. Dan.* 2.19.2 (Schmidt, 75–76; GCSNF 7:96).

understanding of the church and empire because of the way it grants the church a uniquely privileged place of authority in relation to governing authorities. To understand how this is the case, it is necessary to appreciate the connection that Hippolytus's apocalyptic reading of Scripture establishes with the interpretation of dreams that figures so prominently in the book of Daniel and the political role of dream interpretation in kingdoms like that of the neo-Babylonian and Persian Empires. In the ancient world, the ability to discern cryptic forms of divine communication, especially dreams, functioned as an integral part of the stability of the state.[145] As Benjamin Gladd has summarized in his examination of the theme of mystery in the book of Daniel, while the process of divinization in the ancient world is complex and varied, it can be summarized as the process by which gods reveal future events through signs. These signs may manifest in a number of different natural phenomena, including human dreams. The process of divinization involved diviners consulting records of signs from the past and comparing them to the current situation in order to discern how they reveal the future based on divine precedent.[146] This is true of dreams, as interpreters would often consult dream books to determine the meaning of the symbols conveyed in the dreams.[147]

Visions and dreams, thus, were received as signs of divine favor and privileged points of contact with the divine realm.[148] They conveyed heavenly wisdom, which was

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[145] The ancient understanding of dreams have been classified in a couple of different ways in contemporary scholarship. Oppenheim has identified two types of dreams: message dreams, in which the communication is unambiguous, and symbolic dreams, which are full of riddling images and figures. A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1956), 184–217. Butler, on the other hand, distinguishes further between three types of prognostic dreams: message dreams, symbolic–message dreams, and dream omens, with the distinction between the latter two having to do with whether or not the dream is accompanied by its interpretation through a heroic figure or deity (symbolic-message dreams). Sally A. L. Butler, *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams and Dream Rituals*, AOAT 258 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1998), 15–20.

[146] Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 22–23.

[147] Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 23.

[148] Frances Flannery, "Dreams and Visions in Early Jewish and Early Christian Apocalypses

integral to a king's role as the mediator of cosmic and social harmony.[149] The critical role of this form of wisdom to kingship is reflected in the stories of Daniel (and, before him, of Joseph).[150] As scholars have noted, Daniel's ministry as an interpreter of dreams has much in common with the practice of mantic wisdom in ancient Near Eastern societies. What distinguishes the portrayal of mantic wisdom in the book of Daniel from the ancient Near East, however, is the content of that wisdom. As Gladd explains, whereas "pagan mantic wisdom is concerned with revelations about the immediate future, such as an individual's health, weather, and so on . . . mantic wisdom in Daniel pertains to the *eschatological* future."[151] As Gladd argues, "Externally wisdom portrayed in Daniel is mantic (i.e., the dream and its interpretation), but its content is thoroughly eschatological and continuous with previous biblical prophecy. The content of prophecy has not changed—only its form."[152] Given its prominence in Daniel and other apocalyptic writings, it is evident that this adaptation of mantic wisdom arose within the context of,

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and Apocalypticism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 105. On the significance of dreams and visions in Mesopotamian and ancient Near Eastern cultures, see Butler, *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams*.

[149] The Proverbs of Solomon include the observation that "it is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out" (Prov 25:2). As commentators have observed, this passage couples but contrasts the sources of God's glory and the glory of kings. Given that the searching out of things has a judicial reference, the point being made is that whereas God obtains glory by hiding his wisdom in creation, kings obtain glory by exercising judgment through the wisdom that enables them to search out matters of dispute. As Waltke explains, "To act as a wise judge is an essential part of the kingly glory, which entails the ability to search out the heart of a matter or conflict." Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15–31*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 312. As Van Leeuwen explains, the passage also distinguishes between the glory of God and the divine glory of kings: "God has a certain *kbd* which is uniquely his own; the king also has his *kbd*. The two-fold repetition of *kbd* both distinguishes and associates the respective glory of God and king. The king's glory basks in and is qualified by God's ultimate majesty." Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, *Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25–27*, SBL Dissertation 96 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 69.Thus, the relation "sets sharp limits upon the prerogatives or glory of men and kings in relation to Yahweh" (Van Leeuwen, 69).

[150] The book of Daniel, of course, profoundly influenced Jewish apocalyptic literature and the Revelation of John. On this, see G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

[151] Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 25; see also Richard Bauckham, "The Rise of the Apocalyptic," *Themelios* 3, no. 2 (1978): 14. As Bauckham notes, this applies at least to Mesopotamian apocalypticism, which has a cyclical view of history rather than an eschatological one (Bauckham, 14n28).

[152] Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion*, 26.

and in response to, the development of imperial forms of government.

The nature and role of heavenly wisdom is necessary to highlight in this way because of how Hippolytus understands the Christian reading and interpretation of Scripture to recapitulate the giving of cryptic dreams and their interpretation in the stories of Daniel. As such, it forms an integral part of his understanding of the relationship between the church and the rulers of this age, patterned on the model of the prophets in the courts of ancient kings. I will highlight several facets of this, demonstrating how it applies in Hippolytus's thought to the church.

The first facet is the way the dreams and their interpretations are given. The dreams given to the kings who figure in the stories are political visions, involving visions of future events with profound implications for their kingdoms. This is central to the book of Daniel's own political theology, but it is also a motif found elsewhere in Scripture, such as pharaoh's dream in Genesis 41. While these dreams are given to the kings, they are cryptic. The kings who receive them lack the capacity to interpret their meaning, which becomes a deep source of consternation for them. Furthermore, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar's first dream, he does not even know the content of the dream but must be told what it was by Daniel (Dan 2:5). This incapacity, in turn, produces a relationship of dependence between the king and the prophet of God. The king, lacking the ability to discern the meaning of the dream stands at the mercy of the prophet who through the gift of divine wisdom is the only one capable of unlocking its mystery.

In the same way, for Hippolytus, the cryptic nature of the Scriptures makes earthly rulers dependent on the Spirit-filled witness of the church for the disclosure of the divine economy. It is, as I have already noted, because of the failure to perceive the dispensation of the Spirit in the Scriptures that those who plot and scheme against the church become slavish imitations of the ruler of this age rather than icons of the kingly

glory of God.[153] The church, on the other hand, has been graced with the divine benefaction of wisdom, which enables the saints to discern the true revelation of divine power on the cross.[154] Given the resistance of rulers to the testimony of the saints, the public reading and interpretation of Scripture therefore represents a subversive act, unmasking the satanic nature of imperial ideology.[155]

The second facet involves the content of the dreams themselves. The dreams function not merely to forecast events or to warn kings of impending danger but to disclose the meaning of their reigns. The dreams and their interpretations provide a theological reckoning of earthly rule, establishing its legitimacy on the basis of the authorizing benevolence of God. The dreams remind earthly rulers of their creatureliness and mortality, configuring their rule as representative and answerable to the Creator. The theme of the universal sovereignty of God runs throughout the Danielic stories, and this spiritual revelation has the effect of provoking a confrontation between the prophet and those kings who refuse to receive the truth of their interpretations. This confrontation, however, further serves the calling of God's witnesses. As Oliver O'Donovan explains,

> Empire cannot articulate to itself its suppressed knowledge of its own fragility; the king as dreamer knows something that the king as ruler cannot repeat. Yet at the same time empire cannot abide anyone having secrets, but must drag everything into the light by threat and cruelty so that it may be controlled. Thus it works its own undoing, eliciting the suppressed knowledge that will subvert its own fraudulent pretensions.[156]

Applying this model to the church, the apocalyptic effect of the Scriptures and their

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[153] *Comm. Dan.* 1.16.3 (Schmidt, 43; GCSNF 7:36, 38).

[154] On Hippolytus's portrayal of wisdom as divine benefaction, see *Comm. Dan.* 3.2.3; 6.2 (Schmidt, 98, 103; GCSNF 7:134, 144).

[155] For a reading of the book of Daniel that highlights the theme of subversion, see Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *The Book of Daniel*, in *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, *The Twelve Prophets* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 17–152; see also Anathea E. Portier-Young, *Apocalypse against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 223–79.

[156] Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 88.

interpretation as a revelation of the universal sovereignty of God is the unmasking of political idolatry, the unmasking of any pretense to universal sovereign rule on the part of earthly rulers.

Hippolytus's expansion of typological interpretation thus serves an important theological and pastoral purpose within the context of the church's conflict with external communities.[157] Not only does it demonstrate how the persecution of the church has been anticipated within the Scriptures and demonstrated as part of God's unfolding plan in history, but the ability to discern their own community as the subject of the Scriptures because of their participation in the economy reassures believers that they are indeed the recipients of God's promises, those upon whom the dispensation of the Spirit has fallen. Furthermore, the failure of their opponents to discern the mysteries veiled in the Scriptures not only marks them out as unbelievers but unmasks their identity within a divine metanarrative of which they are unaware. The apocalyptic reading of Scripture enables Christians not to judge based on appearances but to discern the divine economy unfolding in the violence of persecution they have been called to endure. Such knowledge gives them hope as they anticipate the universal unveiling of the mysteries in the age to come.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the apocalyptic reading of Scripture is a better framework for understanding Hippolytus's exegesis. Daniélou laid an important foundation for studies of Hippolytus's exegesis by recognizing the central place of his use of types and images in his interpretation of the Scriptures. However, the prevailing tendency to apply contemporary distinctions between typology and allegory to Hippolytus has obscured important dimensions of his theology and exegesis. Specifically,

[157] Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus*, 156–58.

the proclivity to portray Hippolytus as a historically sensitive interpreter in contrast to figures like Origen has failed to appreciate his understanding of the preaching of the cross as the apocalyptic opening of the Scriptures and the retrospective direction this perspective establishes for his exegesis. It has also tended to reduce Hippolytus's typological interpretation to an exegetical method.

In my analysis of Hippolytus's writings, which has integrated his own hermeneutical reflections, I have sought to demonstrate how his use of types cannot be reduced to the relationship between past and future events, as in contemporary models of typology. For Hippolytus, types and images are understood within the context of an apocalyptic worldview in which the relationship between type and antitype is understood most fundamentally in ontological terms. Within this framework, discernment of the meaning of earthly types and images depends on the revelation of the heavenly, spiritual realities to which they correspond, a revelation accomplished supremely in the cross of Christ. Hippolytus's expansion of the typology of his predecessors represents, therefore, an extension of the unveiling of the Scriptures in the light of Christ. Hippolytus's maximalist interpretation of scriptural types and images is only possible, in his mind, because he begins with Christ, and by extension the church, as the subject of the Scriptures.

Moreover, as I have tried to show, the capacity to understand the spiritual mysteries revealed in Christ according to the Scriptures depends not on an interpretive methodology but on the spiritual quality of the interpreter. It is only as a participant in the spiritual mysteries disclosed in the Scriptures that Scripture's types and images can be properly understood. This participation, in turn, depends on the work of the Father through his Word and Spirit in the church. The unveiling of the revelation hidden in the Scriptures depends not only on the opening of the law and the prophets in the cross but the loosening from the bondage of Satan of those called to know this revelation and the illumination of their minds as the Word becomes a collaborator in the interpretation of his

own self-testimony.

Understanding Hippolytus's apocalyptic reading of Scripture is important to the argument of this study in two ways. First, it clarifies Hippolytus's identification of Christ as the image of God. It is as the subject of the Scriptures, revealed in the last days, that Jesus is known as God's self-revelation. This understanding of the dialogical relationship between Christ and the Scriptures is determinative for how Hippolytus comes to understand the divine image and divine power, a subject which I will consider in the next chapter. Second, Hippolytus's understanding of the apocalypse of Christ as a revelation of two communities—those who share in Word and Spirit and those who do not—profoundly shapes his understanding of the church in its relationship to the phenomenon of empire. This distinction will prove critical for how Hippolytus conceptualizes the church as a community shaped by the image of God in Christ and empire as a project based on a competing vision of the divine image.

CHAPTER 3

CHRIST AS THE PERFECT IMAGE OF GOD

In this chapter, I argue that Hippolytus's understanding of Christ as the perfect image of God profoundly shapes his understanding of divine power. I begin my exploration of his incarnational theology by recourse to his argument in *Against Noetus*. After situating the treatise within the context of the Monarchian controversy to which it sought to respond, I map out different perspectives on the Christology reflected in the work. After surveying three primary options, I turn to the argument of the treatise in the remainder of the chapter, tracing Hippolytus's assumptions and line of reasoning. My analysis is developed through a close reading of *Against Noetus*, building on the insights from the last chapter and being especially sensitive to the paradigmatic remarks with which Hippolytus frames his approach to the controversy.

The overall effect of my analysis is to demonstrate how Hippolytus's understanding of the identity of Christ as the image of God, and therefore the starting point for theology, determines his definition of divine unity as a unity of power revealed, above all, in Christ's passion on the cross. It is the human-divine life of Christ, lived in obedience to the Father and testified by the Spirit, that reveals the sovereign Creator as Father, Son, and Spirit. As the climactic moment of this revelation, the cross imbues Hippolytus's understanding of divine power with a profound sense of irony, given that God's creative power has been revealed in human weakness. As the perfect image of God, Christ is the visible revelation, in and from his humanity, offered up on the cross, of the one true God. The effect of this perspective on Christ is to foreground the nature and purpose of humanity, created in the image of God and called to its full realization in the person of Christ, a subject to which I turn to at more length in the next chapter.

The Monarchian Controversy

The controversy that produced *Against Noetus* was one of several debates that occurred in Rome during the late second century and over the course of the third. At the heart of these debates was the relationship of Jesus Christ to God. The apparent contradiction between the church's monotheism and its long-established practice of worshiping Christ as God necessitated an explanation. Attempts to provide an answer sparked controversies among the Christian communities in Rome, centering especially around those communities led by Victor (AD 189–98), Zephyrinus (AD 198–217), and Callistus (AD 217–22).

The first of these debates involved an enigmatic figure named Theodotus the Cobbler. The earliest record of Theodotus derives from three fragments of a treatise preserved by Eusebius and customarily referred to as the *Little Labyrinth*. The treatise itself is directed against the teachings of Artemon (or Artemas), who apparently revived Theodotus's teaching sometime after they were originally promulgated. The treatise provides little biographical information about Theodotus or Artemon, though the *Refutation of all Heresies,* erroneously attributed to Hippolytus, identifies the former as a Byzantian.[1]

According to the *Little Labyrinth*, at the heart of Theodotus's problematic teaching was the claim that "Christ was a mere man" (ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον).[2] Furthermore, the proponents of this teaching claimed that it represented the ancient faith, enjoying the consensus of all the early teachers and apostles up through the tenure of Victor, who they claim affirmed the teaching as well.[3] The author of the *Little Labyrinth* responds by claiming the teaching to be contradicted by the Scriptures themselves and by citing a

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[1] *Ref.* 7.35 (Litwa, 570).

[2] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.28.6 (SC 41:75).

[3] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.28.3 (SC 41:75).

number of post-apostolic sources who spoke of Christ as God, including Justin, Miltiades, Tatian, and Clement, as well as Irenaeus and Melito, who taught that Christ was both God and man. The author also notes that if Victor had approved of the teaching, he would not have excommunicated Theodotus.[4]

Later in the *Little Labyrinth*, the author reemphasizes the abuse of the Scriptures that lies at the heart of the false teaching. He argues that his opponents, having set aside the ancient rule of faith, fail to know Christ from the Scriptures, which they treat recklessly and fearlessly. Their earthly mindedness, evident in their infatuation with syllogisms and geometry and devotion to unbelieving philosophers, makes them ignorant of the one who is from above. Using such sources for their own heretical opinions, they adulterate the "simple faith" of the divine Scriptures.[5] The author goes on to allege that his opponents have created for themselves revised copies of the Scriptures, supposing to correct the Scriptures in alignment with their own views.[6] As John Behr has noted,

> The point of this criticism is not to deny the claim that Jesus Christ was indeed a man, nor to suggest that the Theodotians are willfully neglecting a divine "part" in Christ alongside the human "part," but rather to point out that they do not *understand* who this Jesus Christ is, for this is an interpretation which can only be made on the basis of Scripture, the Law, the Psalms and the prophets . . . it is in this way, through the interpretative engagement with Scripture, that Jesus Christ is "theologized" (θεολογεῖται), that is, confessed as God.[7]

The immediate debate that prompted *Against Noetus* "concerns similar issues but approached from the opposite direction."[8] The earliest reference to the dispute comes from the *Refutation of All Heresies,* where its author relays that Zephyrinus and Callistus

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[4] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.28.4–6 (SC 41:75).

[5] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.28.13–14 (SC 41:77–78).

[6] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.28.15–16 (SC 41:78).

[7] John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 1, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 144.

[8] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 144.

had charged him with being a "ditheist."[9] In response, the author of the *Refutation* claimed that the teachings of the latter two were derived from a figure known as Noetus of Smyrna, an early proponent of the heresies of Monarchianism and patripassianism. One side of the debate accused the other of polytheism while the other accused the opposite of obliterating all distinctions between Jesus and God. Like the dispute over Theodotus, the Monarchian controversy represented a clash of different theological methodologies. In particular, the debate centered around the question of the appropriate starting point for theology. Behr frames the issue as follows:

> In large measure, this debate turned upon the appropriateness of a theology, already outlined by Justin Martyr, which understood the Word of God as functioning in a similar manner to the second god of Middle Platonism, the assimilation of the Stoic logos and the Platonic demiurge, who bridged the gap between the completely transcendent God and the realm of creation, and then identified this divine being as the one who became incarnate. The author of the *Refutation* follows this approach, in a fairly developed and sophisticated fashion. His opponents, Zephyrinus and Callistus, on the other hand, began from Jesus Christ, as had the Theodotians, though they also acknowledged Jesus Christ as God, the one who reveals the Father.[10]

Behr's assessment of the dynamics at play helpfully highlights the hermeneutical dimensions of the controversy addressed in *Against Noetus*. Indeed, much of Hippolytus's argumentation in the treatise would be devoted to exposing the erroneous assumptions of his opponents regarding the proper relationship between Christ and the Scriptures. Before considering his argument, however, I will explore how the debates surrounding the Christology of the treatise have been framed.

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[9] *Ref.* 9.11.3; 12.16 (Litwa, 644; 650). On the Christology of Callistus, see R. E. Heine, "The Christology of Callistus," *JTS* 49, no. 1 (1998): 56–91.

[10] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 145. The distinction was also explained by Harnack using different terminology: "Monarchians of all shades had a common interest in opposition to Logos Christology: *they represented the conception of the Person of Christ founded on the history of salvation, as against one based on the history of his nature*." Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan (London: Williams & Norgate, 1910), 3:62. Both Behr and Harnack argue that the views of Zephyrinus and Callistus reflect the theological legacy of Irenaeus. Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 145; Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:262.

The Christology of *Against Noetus* in Contemporary Scholarship

Scholars have disagreed about where the Christology of *Against Noetus* falls in relation to these opposing traditions. The theories that have been proposed can be divided into three categories. First, some have argued that the Christology of *Against Noetus* represents a deviation from the Christology of Irenaeus, sharing much in common with the "Logos Christology" of Justin and the apologists. A second argues that Hippolytus accommodates his theology in different works according to the contexts in which they were written. A third is premised on the strong similarities between Hippolytus and the theological tradition reflected in the thought of Irenaeus. I will consider each of these briefly before examining the argument of *Against Noetus*.

Hippolytus the Hellenizer

Adolf von Harnack grants Hippolytus a privileged place in the history of Christian theology. Ranking him among the earliest ecclesiastical dogmaticians, he argues that Hippolytus contributed significantly to the philosophical formulation of dogma that would transform the primitive faith of the early church into a sophisticated philosophical system.[11] Several important observations should be made about Harnack's assessment of Hippolytus's theology. First, Harnack draws a sharp distinction between the theology and Christology of Hippolytus and Tertullian on the one hand and Irenaeus on the other. He claims that Hippolytus and Tertullian "simply adopted and developed [the Logos doctrine] of the Apologists," whereas Irenaeus went in an original direction.[12] Unlike Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus developed their Logos doctrine "without reference to the historical Jesus, the truth rather being that they simply add[ed] the

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[11] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:9–11. Harnack defines *dogma* as "propositions handed down in the creed of the Church, shown to exist in the Holy Scriptures of both Testaments, and rationally reproduced and formulated" (9).

[12] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:256. Elsewhere, he states that Hippolytus, like Tertullian, "lagged behind [Irenaeus]" (2:244).

incarnation to the already existing theory of the subject."[13] In contrast, Harnack argues that the distinctive feature of Irenaeus's Logos doctrine is the way he "made Jesus Christ, whom he views as God and man, the *starting-point* of his speculation," following the precedent already established in the Gospel of John and Ignatius. "It is of Jesus that Irenaeus almost always thinks when he speaks of the Logos or of the Son of God; and therefore he does not identify the divine element in Christ or Christ himself with the world idea or the creating Word or the Reason of God."[14]

Harnack's distinction between Hippolytus and Irenaeus is primarily due to his reading of *Noet.* 10, which he regards as one of the "chief passages" for understanding Hippolytus's Christology.[15] While Harnack does not provide an explicit summary of Hippolytus's Christology in this passage, he equates it with the Christology of Tertullian, which he summarizes as follows: In the beginning, God existed alone but had always with him his *ratio* and *sermo*. When he chose to reveal himself, he sent forth his word of creation and the Logos came into existence as a real person (there had only been one person before). While being a separate person from the Father, the Word is one with the Father in substance and power and therefore rightly called the "Son" of the Father. However, all that the Son possesses has been given to him by the Father; therefore, the Son is subordinate to the Father. Furthermore, given that the fullness of deity cannot enter the finite, the Son cannot but be only a part of the whole. Thus, Harnack claims that Tertullian "regards the Son as the Deity depotentiated for the sake of self-

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[13] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:262.

[14] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:262.

[15] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:286–87n1. The other two chief passages are *Antichr.* 3 (GCS 1.2.5–6); and *Ref.* 10.33 (Litwa, 749–58), the latter of which, as I have already noted, is no longer regarded by most scholars as having been written by the same author.

communication; the Deity adapted to the world."[16] The implication of this is that "from the standpoint of humanity this Deity is God himself, *i.e.*, a God whom men can apprehend and who can apprehend them; but from God's standpoint, which speculation can fix but not fathom, this Deity is a subordinate, nay, even a temporary one."[17] That Harnack takes this as a fair summary of Hippolytus's Christology is evident from his concluding remark: "Tertullian and Hippolytus know as little of an immanent Trinity as the Apologists; the Trinity only *appears* such, because the unity of the substance is very vigorously emphasised (*sic*); but in truth the Trinitarian process as in the case of the Gnostics, is simply the background of the process that produces the history of the world and of salvation."[18] For Harnack, this Logos doctrine represented little more than an adoption of the gnostic doctrine of aeons, the only difference being that Tertullian and Hippolytus restrict the economy of God to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, instead of the more populous pleroma of the gnostics.[19] According to Harnack, the only significant difference between the two theologians and Greek philosophers is the former's supplemental identification of the historical Jesus with the Word.[20]

In a subsequent section of his work, Harnack gives special attention to Hippolytus's views on the incarnation, albeit only in a (lengthy) footnote. Highlighting several passages from the Hippolytan corpus, he argues for both Hippolytus's continuity with and divergence from figures like Irenaeus and Tertullian. He cites a section from *Antichr.* 3–4 to show that Hippolytus shared with both the conviction that Christ's death

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[16] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:260. The summary is taken from Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:259–60; it draws primarily from Tertullian's arguments in *Against Praxeas*. My purpose in including this summary is not to assess the claims Harnack makes regarding Tertullian's views but to explain his understanding of Hippolytus's, which I will assess later in this chapter.

[17] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:260.

[18] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:260–61.

[19] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:258.

[20] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:261.

on the cross was the object of the assumption of the flesh and with Irenaeus the idea that the union of the Word with humanity had already begun in the prophets.[21] He then references *Ref.* 10.33 and *Noet.* 10 as key christological passages. With regard to the latter, he claims that among "many other deviations" is Hippolytus's insistence that the name of "Son" only be applied to the incarnate Word. Harnack interprets this as a compromise between the older Christology of Irenaeus and Tertullian and the contemporary views of his opponents who argued for an eternal Word of God but not a "pre-temporal hypostasis of the Son."[22] For Harnack, this, along with his propensity to speak more frequently of the "divine mysteries" of the faith, is evidence that Hippolytus was far more deeply influenced by Hellenistic philosophy than his teacher Irenaeus.[23] Harnack's final claim regarding Hippolytus's Christology is that despite his devotion to the Scriptures, "from the fragments and writings of this author that are preserved to us the existence of very various Christologies can be shown; and this proves that the Christology of his teacher Irenaeus had not by any means yet become predominant in the church, as we might suppose from the latter's confident tone."[24]

At least part of the reason for Harnack's interpretation of Hippolytus's Christology is that he assumes *Against Noetus* and the *Refutation* shared the same author.[25] However, similar positions to Harnack's have been taken up by scholars who now question that association. Manlio Simonetti, for example, offers a summary largely aligned with Harnack's description of Hippolytus's Christology, while also recognizing

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[21] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:286–87n1.

[22] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:287n1.

[23] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:287n1.

[24] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 2:287n1.

[25] The same is true of subsequent scholars like Capelle, whose essay on the subject renders Hippolytus's Christology through an intertextual reading of the two works. D. B. Capelle, "Le Logos, Fils De Dieu, dans La Théologie D'hippolyte," *RTAM* 9 (1937): 109–24.

the latter's emphasis on the incarnation:

> Of that doctrine, which distinguished the Son, divine Logos, as an entity distinct from God the Father, generated from the latter for the purpose of the creation and governance of the world, [Hippolytus] derived from his predecessors the affirmation of two distinct moments in the relationship between God and his Logos: one in which the latter is immanent in the former as impersonal thought, wisdom, potency, will; another in which he is generated as a personally distinct divine entity. Although generated and distinct from the Father before time, the Logos can only be defined Son proleptically, because he becomes perfect Son only when he incarnates. In this accentuation of the significance of the incarnation, understood as absolutely real and with all the limitations of the divinity which it brought, we should probably see a stand against gnostic docetism.[26]

Like Harnack, Simonetti argues that Hippolytus conceives of the Word as existing in two stages, the former as an immanent and impersonal reality within God and the latter as a personal entity distinct from the Father. Unlike Harnack, however, he does not regard Hippolytus's statements about proleptic Sonship as a compromise of Irenaeus and Tertullian's Christology but as a means of emphasizing the incarnation. Simonetti's reference to the "limitations of the divinity which it brought" demonstrates greater attention to the concluding section of *Against Noetus* in which Hippolytus eloquently celebrates the union of human and divine in Christ.[27]

Brent's interpretation of the relevant passages collapses the distinction that Harnack and Simonetti make between two pre-incarnate stages of the Word. His reading is based on how he understands Hippolytus's effort to achieve a rapprochement between the harsher anti-Monarchianism of the author of the *Refutation* and the Monarchian sympathies of Callistus. Given that the views of the former open him up to the charge of ditheism, Hippolytus seeks a resolution to the problem by collapsing the distinction between the immanent Word and the begotten Word prior to the incarnation.[28] In other

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[26] Manlio Simonetti, "Hippolytus," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 2:249.

[27] See *Noet.* 17–18, to which I will return later in this chapter.

[28] Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop*, SVigChr 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 220–22.

words, Hippolytus does not regard the preincarnate Word as having existed in two stages of relationship to the Father prior to the incarnation, as is commonly assumed. Rather, the Word exists in two stages on either side of the incarnation. The Word, who exists before time, is considered instrumentally rather than personally as the medium through which God created the world. A distinct personal relationship only emerges with the Sonship of the Word in his incarnation.

Thus, whereas the author of the *Refutation*—in keeping with prior views such as those of Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian—asserted a distinction between the immanent Word and the begotten Word prior to the incarnation, Hippolytus in *Against Noetus* softens this position, admitting only the impersonal reality of the immanent Word prior to the incarnation. The implication of Allen Brent's interpretation is that Hippolytus thought of the incarnation as a process in which the Word underwent a change, becoming something that he had not been. For Brent, Hippolytus's Christology is ultimately a betrayal of Irenaeus's Logos theology and represents a view that would eventually be deemed heretical in subsequent centuries.[29]

Hippolytus the Sophist

Yancy Smith disagrees with Brent's contention that Hippolytus's Christology represents a betrayal of Irenaeus. Taking account of several passages from the commentary *On the Song of Songs*, he argues instead that Hippolytus "adapted and adjusted" his formulations depending on the audience he was addressing.[30] For Smith, the Christology of the commentary does not fit the picture of accommodation offered by Brent to explain the differences between the *Refutation* and *Against Noetus*. Prime evidence of this is Hippolytus's very close identification between Christ and the Son with

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[29] Brent, *Hippolytus and Roman Church in Third Century*, 335.

[30] Yancy Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing: Hippolytus's Commentary on the Song of Songs in Social and Critical Contexts*, GSECP 62 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2015), 180.

the preincarnate Logos in *In Cant.* 1.6–8. There, Hippolytus identifies the Son as the Wisdom the Father brought forth for the creation of the world: "Now this Wisdom was certainly none other than Christ; and Christ is the Son."[31]

Smith acknowledges that in *On the Song of Songs*, Hippolytus presents the incarnation as a new revelation. But, according to Smith, this newness is not "the transformation of the Logos from potential to perfect Son,"[32] an idea which Smith *does* believe to be expressed in the *Commentary on Daniel* and *Against Noetus*. Rather, the newness has to do with the economy of salvation. As evidence, he takes *In Cant.* 2.5–6, in which Hippolytus interprets a reference to anointing oil in Song of Songs 1:3 as a type of the Word: "A fragrance of anointing oil spread out is your name."[33] His explication of the typological significance helps to clarify his understanding of what is accomplished in the incarnation. As long as anointing oil is contained in a vessel, it does not emit an aroma, though it holds its aroma within itself. It is only when the oil is released that it fills others with its aroma. Even so, "the Word was in the heart of the Father, and so long as it had not gone forth, no one rejoiced in it all, but when the Father dispersed the Spirit of the aroma, the Word spread joy abroad to all."[34] From what follows in the commentary, it is clear that Hippolytus is referring to the incarnation of the Word and not a preexistent procession from the Father: "For the vessel of joy has been opened, which is the paternal mouth. By bringing forth the esteemed Word from him[self], he causes the aroma to descend from heaven."[35]

As to the Logos theology in *Against Noetus* (and the *Commentary on Daniel*),

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[31] *In Cant.* 1.8 (Smith, 427).

[32] Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 182.

[33] Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 182.

[34] *In Cant.* 2.5 (Smith, 447–48).

[35] *In Cant.* 2.6 (Smith, 449).

Smith argues that in light of the passage from *On Song of Songs* Hippolytus does not actually deny the personality of the preincarnate Word but merely tries to appear to do so. Smith's position depends on the assumption that *On the Song of Songs* is a post-baptismal mystagogy written for "insiders," whereas the other writings, being more outward facing, were adapted for the purpose of rapprochement with the larger Roman church during the bishopric of Callistus.[36] These works intentionally obscure, in a sophistic manner, the truths revealed in the anointing ceremony reflected in *On the Song of Songs*.[37] In other words, Hippolytus's language in *Against Noetus* represents a rhetorical, diplomatic strategy.[38]

Hippolytus the Student of Irenaeus

Aloys Grillmeier also interprets Hippolytus differently from Brent, though not in the manner of Smith. He too affirms that Hippolytus's Christology reflects the influence of Irenaeus, particularly in its emphasis on the history of revelation and the union of divine and human in Christ.[39] But instead of speculating about Hippolytus's motives in *Against Noetus*, he explains the language in the treatise by highlighting the unity that Hippolytus stresses between the invisible generation of the Word from the Father and his human birth as Son. He claims that the incarnation is so important for

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[36] Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 183.

[37] Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 184.

[38] Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 185. Smith also downplays the distinction between *Against Noetus* and the *Refutation,* arguing that the latter does not explicitly affirm the preincarnate Logos as Son either. He tentatively suggests that the exegetical writings and the *Refutation* could share the same author (186).

[39] Other scholars that have recognized the seminal influence of Irenaeus on Hippolytus's theology include Butterworth, for whom Hippolytus's Christology "recalls no Christian theologian more than Irenaeus." Robert Butterworth, review of *La Cristologia di Ippolito*, by Antonio Zani, *JTS* 38, no. 2 (1987): 523; and Campenhausen, for whom Hippolytus's indebtedness to Irenaeus rises to the level of regurgitation: "He thinks of himself with pride as an orthodox bishop and as an outstanding theological investigator and scholar; but if one examines the substance of his writings, there is hardly anything to be found which does not occur also in Irenaeus, or which goes in any significant point beyond the latter's suggestions." Hans von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible*, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 271.

Hippolytus's argument because it is through the incarnation that the distinction between the Father and the Word is revealed. This revelation "does not mean that the Logos first comes fully to himself (*qua* Logos) in the incarnation. It is that now the invisible procession of the Logos becomes visible to the world. Both are inwardly related."[40] Grillmeier thus understands the second stage of the Word as λόγος ἔνσαρκος as revelatory of the existence which the Word enjoys with the Father as λόγος ἄσαρκος.

Grillmeier supports this reading of *Against Noetus* by reference to Hippolytus's understanding of the "theophanies" of the Old Testament. He argues that Hippolytus regards these as belonging to the historical revelation of the Word, as a "prelude to the incarnation, the beginning of the process of the incarnation in the full sense."[41] Thus, τέλειος should not be understood with reference to the personal development of the Word but with reference to the "perfectness of the appearance in the world."[42] Citing Hippolytus's language from the *Commentary on Daniel*, he notes how in the biblical stories the Logos appeared only "in part" (μερικῶς; *Comm. Dan.* 4.39.4), ἐν σχήματι ἀνθρώπου, but not yet in the full human form (τελείως ἄνθρωπος) which he assumed in the incarnation.[43] For Grillmeier, Hippolytus's language of "perfect Son" should be understood as an affirmation of the reality of the incarnation.[44]

In his comprehensive survey of Hippolytus's Christology, Antonio Zani also draws out the Irenaean shape of Hippolytus's thought. He addresses the controversial language of the sonship of the Word in *Against Noetus*, explaining that for Hippolytus τελέιος υιος does not represent an ontological improvement of the Word but the

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[40] Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, trans. J. S. Bowden, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 114.

[41] Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 115.

[42] Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 115.

[43] Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 115.

[44] Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 116.

completion of the Word's purpose as Son of Man. Sophisticatedly drawing together the significance of the dual generation of the incarnate Word, Zani explains that the Word's generation from Mary as a human being serves to reveal his eternal filial identity as the Only Begotten from the Father. Zani's approach highlights the "paradigmatic-revelatory" character of the incarnation, demonstrating how the language of perfection serves to distinguish between the way in which the Word was proleptically called Son in the Scriptures with regard to the future incarnation and the realization of that reality in the Word's birth from Mary.[45] Perfection, therefore, has to do with revelation rather than ontology.[46]

More recently, Behr has provided a fuller reassessment of Hippolytus's Christology, addressing both the question of the relationship between Jesus and God and the argument regarding the language of sonship. The basis for his reassessment is his broader reading of early Christology, in which he traces two distinct approaches among Christian writers. The first, reflected in figures like Justin Marty and Malchion at the Council of Antioch (AD 264–69), attempts to understand the identity of Christ in terms of a "personal subject" whose biography is traced from a pre-incarnate existence through a subsequent incarnation.[47] For Behr, the deficiency of this perspective is that it fails to appreciate the Word as a revelation of the Father, making him instead a revelation of a lower divinity. In the case of the council, it also makes Jesus Christ no longer the Word of God but a "compound of which one element is the Word."[48] More importantly, in both cases, the "subject of reflection has changed, from Jesus Christ to the Word, the latter

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[45] Antonio Zani, *La Cristologia di Ippolito*, Ricerche di Scienze Teologische 22 (Brescia, Italy: Morcelliana, 1984), 309–34.

[46] Zani, *La Cristologia di Ippolito*, 378.

[47] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 238.

[48] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 238.

understood as an independent, divine or semi-divine, agent."[49] The consequence of this shift of focus is that it "effectively turns theology into mythology, an attempt to recount, from an unspecified vantage point, the biography of this Word and to explain, in a crude materialistic manner, the structure or composition of the being of Christ, the Incarnate Word."[50]

The second way of understanding the identity of Christ is to consider it in terms of properties that are predicated of Christ in the gospel. In this case, the subject of theological reflection is always the crucified and risen Christ proclaimed in the early church's kerygma. It is the crucified and risen Christ "who is the Word of God and the Son of the Father."[51] In this approach, "the eternity of Christ is not temporalized, nor is his preexistence understood in terms of a continuity of personal subject who is identified by other characteristics prior to the Passion."[52] It is within this stream of early Christology that Behr situates Hippolytus.

In applying this framework to Hippolytus, Behr assumes Brent's thesis that *Against Noetus* represents a rapprochement between the position of the author of the *Refutation* and Callistus's position. Behr also highlights several important features of Hippolytus's argument. First, he notes its exegetical focus, drawing attention to the way in which Hippolytus charges the Noetians with using the Scriptures arbitrarily, failing to see the reference of the passages they misinterpret as speaking of Christ Jesus, the Word of God.[53] Second, he demonstrates how in the second part of the treatise, Hippolytus

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[49] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 238.

[50] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 238.

[51] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 239.

[52] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 239.

[53] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 156. As Heine has noted, the approach to the Noetians in this work is completely different from that of *Ref.* 9.10.9–12; 10.27.1–2 (Litwa, 632–58, 734), where the author does not engage in exegetical arguments but instead attempts to demonstrate how the views of the Noetians

takes a very different trajectory than the author of the *Refutation*. Rather than beginning from a philosophical framework that relates the Father, Logos, and creation, he argues that it is to the Scriptures that one must look to consider how they speak of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Behr explains, for Hippolytus "the departure point for theological reflection is emphatically the salvific manifestation of the Lord, the Mind of the Father and his Word, who prior to this revelation was known only to the Father, being but a 'sound' to the world."[54] In his analysis of this work, Behr consistently points to the way in which it is only in Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as proclaimed by the apostles according to the Scriptures that God is revealed. This methodology aligns Hippolytus with figures like Zephyrinus, Callistus, and above all, Irenaeus by beginning with the Scriptures rather than theological and philosophical speculation.[55] It distinguishes him in significant ways from the "Logos theology" of the apologists and Justin Martyr, who tended to begin from accounts of the pre-incarnate Word largely resembling the mediating deity of Middle Platonism before turning to the subsequent stage of his biography as Jesus Christ.[56] Behr's approach helps him to make sense of Hippolytus's hesitancy in ascribing the language of Sonship prior to the Word's incarnation. Citing *Noet.* 15.7, Behr argues that Hippolytus's hesitancy reflects an anti-docetic disposition:

> The point Hippolytus is making here, which epitomizes his whole approach to theological reflection, is simply that one can only understand the Word of God as it is revealed in the preaching of Jesus Christ, the enfleshed Word, yet, at the same time, one must not remain at the flesh itself, for the flesh only exists as the flesh of the Word. As we have seen, the Son of God, the enfleshed Word, is only made

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were derived from the philosopher Heraclitus instead of Christ. R. E. Heine, "The Christology of Callistus," 84–85.

[54] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 157.

[55] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 141–42. J. N. D. Kelly also affirms the continuity with Irenaeus, noting in particular the way in which Hippolytus appropriates his use of the term *economy* in speaking of the revelation of God in creation and redemption. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (Peabody, MA: Prince, 2007), 110.

[56] On Middle Platonism see John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, rev. ed. (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

> manifest in the preaching of the apostles. . . . The point of the distinction between the "fleshlessness" of the Word prior to the apostolic preaching and the enfleshed state thereafter, is not to sketch events in a mythical biography of the Word of God, nor to suggest that the eternal Word of God has undergone a change. Rather, the point of the contrast is ultimately antidocetic, to emphasize that despite the fact that the Word of God was always seen and spoken of in human form, foreshadowing what was to come, Jesus Christ, the Son and Word of God, was really flesh as we are, though this can only be contemplated in the apostolic preaching, as the Word of God.[57]

A major factor that distinguishes Behr's reading of Hippolytus from the others I have summarized is its recognition of a robust theological anthropology in the early Christian tradition reflected in Hippolytus, which emphasized the central role of the human being within the divine economy as the image of God.[58] In his work on the theological anthropology of the early church, M. C. Steenberg summarizes this perspective as follows:

> The human person stands at the very centre of Christian reality. At the pinnacle of creation is its formation by the very hands of God. At the opposite pole, at the eschaton, the Christian scriptures proclaim humanity's fulfillment and perfection. Along the way, between these poles of creation and fulfilment, the whole of the economy is focused on this being: that which God fashions, which turns against its creator, for which the creator works correction and redemption, even becoming that which he deigns to save.
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> At the heart of this historical notion of the "economy of salvation" as Irenaeus of Lyons seems to be the first to have called it, stands Christ: God-made-man.[59]

As Steenberg further explains, this framework makes the chronology assumed by Harnack and others untenable and distortive of the thought of figures like Irenaeus:

> This centrality is not temporal, as if it represented some historical "midpoint" between the pre-and post-incarnational history of the human story. Rather, it is theological: it speaks of Christ not as the midpoint of history, but the central reference of all theological vision. All that comes before and after the historical incarnation in Galilee is centred in the reality of the one there manifest and made known, and has its true meaning and character in the same. The human race, which pre-dates the historical events of the birth, passion and resurrection of Christ, does

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[57] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 161.

[58] On the theological anthropology of the early Christian tradition that I will argue is operative in Hippolytus, see M. C. Steenberg, *Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009).

[59] Steenberg, *Of God and Man*, 1.

> not pre-date the one thus born, crucified and risen, but from the first to the last takes its reality from the one there seen and touched, yet from all ages known.[60]

The early Christian identification of Jesus as the starting point for theology means that theology and anthropology can never be separated, since to "speak of Jesus Christ as incarnate Son of the Father is intrinsically to speak both of the nature of humanity (the anthropology of the Son) and a triadic understanding of the divine (the nature of the Son as Son of the Father, united with the Spirit)."[61] Since the *anthropos* and *theos* converge in the single subject of Christ, reflection on the meaning of the incarnation is inherently anthropological *and* theological.[62]

It also means that common, contemporary ways of conceptualizing the incarnation fail to do justice to the precedent established in the early church. These approaches, which either reduce the incarnation to the virgin birth or understand it in a more general way to articulate the concept of God-becoming-man, encourage a chronological approach to the divine in which the incarnation is regarded as one period in the history of the Word of the Father. This reverses the order of revelation as understood in early Christianity. Steenberg explains this dimension of early Christian thought more fully:

> There the one spoken of is not the Word known first, who has become incarnate, but Jesus Christ first and foremost as encountered person, known in that encounter as eternal Word. This distinction, between God understood as coming to be man, and a man coming to be understood as God, constitutes an important confession of the one who *is* Word and Son in the flesh, and how he is known as such. . . . The starting point is not a dogmatic confession of the Son followed by a description of his human becoming, but the human Christ who *from* and *in* his humanity is identified with the eternal Son of the Father. One does not begin with the eternal Word, later to take flesh. One begins with the flesh and bones of Jesus of Galilee, and sees in him the eternity of the divine Son.[63]

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[60] Steenberg, *Of God and Man*, 1.

[61] Steenberg, *Of God and Man*, 2.

[62] Steenberg, *Of God and Man*, 2–3.

[63] Steenberg, *Of God and Man*, 3.

In the sections that follow, I argue that this framework structures Hippolytus's argument in *Against Noetus*. For Hippolytus, Jesus Christ is always the starting point for theology. His approach to the christological controversy in *Against Noetus* consistently refrains from speculation about God apart from how he has been revealed in his image, Jesus Christ, emphasizing throughout the treatise the necessity of Christ's humanity to God's self-revelation. This, in turn, reflects a profoundly Irenaean theological anthropology that understands humanity as the image of God whose likeness to its creator is perfected in the incarnation of the Word. In elucidating this framework within Hippolytus's argument, I will also bring special attention to how it relates to Hippolytus's understanding of the unity of God as a unity of power, demonstrating how Hippolytus understands the human-divine life of Christ as a revelation of this divine unity. Hippolytus's concept of divine power as revealed in Christ will serve as the basis for examining his understanding of the church as an image of divine power in the next chapter.

The Argument of *Against Noetus*

The argument of *Against Noetus* can be divided into two main sections. After introducing the context of the controversy surrounding Noetus and his followers, Hippolytus devotes the first part of his argument to a refutation of their interpretation of key scriptural passages, showing how they misinterpret the Scriptures by failing to perceive within them the mystery of the economy, the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. In the second part, he provides his own scriptural argument for how the unity of the one God is revealed in the economic harmony of Father, Son, and Spirit through the human-divine life of the Son, understood according to the Scriptures.[64]

[64] On the structure of *Against Noetus*, see Robert Butterworth, "The Structure of *Contra Noetum*," in *Noet.* (Butterworth, 94–117).

Hippolytus's Counter-Interpretation of Scripture Used by the Noetians

To grasp Hippolytus's argument in the first part of the treatise, it is necessary to appreciate how he distinguishes his own position from that of the Noetians. He begins by explaining that the unity of God is not the point of contention in the controversy over the teachings of Noetus. Both parties agree that God is one. The point of contention is how that unity ought to be understood according to the Scriptures. Hippolytus identifies his own position with the tradition of the elders who had condemned Noetus and his teachings. Hippolytus records the claim made by the elders when they expelled Noetus from their community: "We too know in truth one God; we know Christ; we know the Son who suffered as he truly did suffer, who died as he truly did die, who rose on the third day, who is at the right hand of the Father, and who is coming to judge the living and the dead. We confess these things which we have learned."[65]

For Hippolytus, what distinguishes the tradition of the elders from the strange teachings (ἑτέραν διδασκαλίαν) of Noetus is that it begins with Christ in seeking to understanding what it means for God to be one.[66] Within this perspective, the witness of the Scriptures to the unity of God is premised on the identification of Christ as the subject of the Scriptures. It is only by beginning with Christ as the subject of the Scriptures that their witness to the unity of God can be properly understood.

For Hippolytus, the Noetians begin from a different starting point. They begin with scriptural references to the unity of God, understood apart from the revelation of Christ, and then seek to accommodate Christ to their preconceived notion of divine unity. Hippolytus cites two scriptural passages used by the Noetians to defend their understanding of the unity of God. The first is a pastiche of Exodus 3:6 and the first

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[65] *Noet.* 1.6, 7 (Radde-Gallwitz, 60; Butterworth, 45).

[66] *Noet.* 1.1, 7 (Radde-Gallwitz, 59–60; Butterworth, 43, 45).

commandment of the Decalogue (Exod 20:3): "I am the God of your fathers; you shall have no other gods besides me." The second is Isaiah 44:6: "I am the first and I am the last, and in addition to me there is no one."[67] For the Noetians, passages such as these establish the God's oneness independent of any reference to the incarnation. As such, they represent the starting point for understanding what it means for God to be one. The result is that the revelation of Christ must be accommodated to prior assumptions about the meaning of such passages rather than the other way around.

According to Hippolytus, it is this understanding of the relationship between Christ and the Scriptures that compels the Noetians to identify Jesus and the Father as one and the same. He summarizes the logic of their position as follows: "So then, if I confess that Christ is God, then he is the Father, if he is God. Now Christ, who is God, suffered. Therefore, you see, the Father suffered, for he himself was the Father."[68] The identification of Christ with the Father depends on the prior assumption about the nature of the unity of God, understood independently of the revelation of Christ. For Hippolytus, it is the Noetians' abstraction of their notion of divine unity apart from what has been revealed in the incarnation that compels them to reject any personal distinction between Father and Son.[69]

Hippolytus notes, perhaps with a sense of irony, that the rejection of Christ as the subject of the Scriptures is the same error that led to Theodotus's heretical teaching that Christ was a mere human being (ἄνθρωπον φιλὸν).[70] Both the Noetians and Theodotus attempt to understand the Scriptures while denying the economy revealed in

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[67] As cited in *Noet.* 2.1–2 (Radde-Gallwitz, 60; Butterworth, 45).

[68] *Noet.* 2.3 (Radde-Gallwitz, 60; Butterworth, 45).

[69] I use the language of *person* because of how Hippolytus later uses it to explain the distinction between Father and Son (*Noet.* 7.1), as I will discuss below.

[70] *Noet.* 3.1 (Radde-Gallwitz, 61; Butterworth, 49).

Christ.[71] For Hippolytus, what the Noetians and Theodotus share in common is a hermeneutic that makes the incarnation superfluous to God's self-revelation in the Scriptures.[72] Both positions begin by presuming to know what it means to be God and then seeking to accommodate the identity of Christ and his relationship with the Father to their preconceived notions. While they arrive at opposite errors, both begin from the same faulty understanding of the relationship between Christ and the Scriptures.

Given that the controversy comes down to two fundamentally different ways of reading the same texts, Hippolytus recognizes that he cannot merely quote scriptural passages but must demonstrate their meaning and coherence by reference to the economy revealed in them through Christ. Thus, he argues, "Our chief tasks above all must be to overturn their understanding and to offer a demonstration that accords with the truth."[73] After overturning the understanding of the Noetians through his own counter-interpretations of key passages, Hippolytus would then be able to pursue his ultimate goal, which is to explain the unity of God on the basis of his revelation in Christ, demonstrating how "the Father is one God, 'from whom all fatherhood' exists, through whom all things exist, from whom all things exist; and [that] we exist in him."[74]

Hippolytus's counter-interpretations in the first part of the treatise address three primary passages used by the Noetians to identify the Father as the Son and subject

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[71] *Noet.* 3.4 (Radde-Gallwitz, 61; Butterworth, 49).

[72] In my opinion, Hippolytus's emphasis on the incarnation in *Against Noetus* does not suggest that the Monarchians denied the humanity of Christ but that they made the incarnation superfluous to God's self-revelation. Bracht claims that the Noetians denied the humanity of Christ on the presumption that divinity and humanity cannot co-exist in a single being, but the passages she cites do not lend support to this claim. Her subsequent claim that Hippolytus sets aside the relationship of the divine and human in Christ in his response to the Noetians, a claim contradicted above all else by the climactic conclusion to his treatise, seems indebted to this misreading of the views of the Noetians. See Katharina Bracht, "Product or Foundation? The Relationship between the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity and Christology in Hippolytus' and Tertullian's Debate with Monarchianism," *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 18, no. 1 (2007): 17–19.

[73] *Noet.* 3.5 (Radde-Gallwitz, 61; Butterworth, 49).

[74] *Noet.* 3.6 (Radde-Gallwitz, 61; Butterworth, 49); cf. 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 3:15.

of the incarnation. The first is Baruch 3:36–38. The version cited in *Against Noetus* reads as follows: "This is our God; no other shall be compared to him. He found out the entire way of knowledge and gave it to Jacob his son and to Israel his beloved. Afterwards he was seen on the earth and lived among human beings."[75] Noetus's interpretation of the meaning of this passage depends on his identification between the "the one who alone is God" and he "who afterwards was seen and lived among human beings."[76]

The second passage cited by Hippolytus is Isaiah 45:14, which Hippolytus cites as follows:

> Egypt toiled, and both the merchandise of the Ethiopians as well as the Sabaean giants will come over to you and they will be your slaves and they will walk behind you bound in handcuffs and will bow to you, because God is in you, and to you they will pray, and there is no God besides you. For you are God and we did not know, God of Israel, savior.[77]

Once again, Noetus's interpretation hinges on his identification of the one God with the "one who is visibly revealed."[78]

To these scriptural passages, Noetus also added the testimony of the apostle Paul, citing Romans 9:5: "To them belong the fathers, from them comes Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all blessed forever."[79] For Noetus, who clearly begins with a preconceived notion of divine sovereignty, Paul's attribution of sovereignty to Christ is a clear sign that he is to be identified as the Father incarnate. On the basis of such passages, in which "only one is confessed," Noetus claimed he was bound to affirm that "this one bore the suffering. For Christ was God and suffered on our behalf, the same one being

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[75] *Noet.* 2.5 (Radde-Gallwitz, 60; Butterworth, 47).

[76] *Noet.* 2.5 (Radde-Gallwitz, 60; Butterworth, 47).

[77] *Noet.* 2.6 (Radde-Gallwitz, 60; Butterworth, 47).

[78] *Noet.* 2.6 (Radde-Gallwitz, 60; Butterworth, 46).

[79] *Noet.* 2.8 (Radde-Gallwitz, 61; Butterworth, 49).

Father (αὐτος ὠν Πατήρ), so that he might be able to save us."[80] In his counter-interpretation of each of these passages, Hippolytus would demonstrate, on the other hand, that the unity of God revealed in the Scriptures can only be understood if the Scriptures are received as a witness to the incarnation of the Word of the Father. Faithful interpretation of the Scriptures requires that one begin with the incarnation, allowing the revelation of Christ to reshape how one understands the oneness of God.

Counter-Interpretation of Isaiah 45:14

In his counter-interpretation of Isaiah 45:14, Hippolytus demonstrates how the Noetians, in ignoring the larger context of the passage, fail to discern how it testifies to the incarnation of the Word as the revelation of the Father and the distinction between Father and Son revealed therein. Hippolytus argues that the broader context clarifies *to* whom and *about* whom Isaiah is speaking.[81] Citing Isaiah 45:11–15, he teaches,

> "Ask me about my sons and my daughters, and command me concerning the works of my hands. I made earth and humanity on it. I with my hand made the heaven solid. I commanded all the stars. I raised him up, and made all his ways straight. He will build my city and overturn the captivity, not with ransoms and with gifts," says the Lord Sabaoth. Thus says the Lord Sabaoth, "Egypt toiled, and both the merchandise of the Ethiopians as well as the Sabaean giants will come over to you and they will be your slaves and they will walk behind you bound in handcuffs and will bow to you, because God is in you, and [to the one who is] in you they will pray, 'Indeed there is no God besides you. For you are God and we did not know, God of Israel, savior.'"[82]

Noting Isaiah's distinction between God who speaks and the one in whom God is and who is subsequently identified as God, Hippolytus begins from the assumption that Christ is the referent of the latter ("In whom is God except in Christ Jesus, the Father's Word and the secret (μυστηρίῳ) of the economy?") before proceeding to demonstrate how

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[80] *Noet.* 2.7 (Radde-Gallwitz, 61; Butterworth, 47).

[81] *Noet.* 4.3 (Radde-Gallwitz, 61–62; Butterworth, 51).

[82] *Noet.* 4.3–4 (Radde-Gallwitz, 61–62; Butterworth, 51).

the details of the passage indicate this to be true.[83] Taking "I raised him up" as a reference to the resurrection of Christ, Hippolytus explains the meaning of Isaiah's testimony by appealing to Romans 8:11, in which Paul identifies the resurrected body of Christ as the means of humanity's participation in the life of God through the indwelling of the Father: "If the Spirit of him who raised Christ up from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus up from the dead will give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwells in you."[84]

In light of Paul's testimony, as Hippolytus explains, the one referred to in the statement "in thee is God" can be none other than Jesus Christ because "when the Word was incarnate and became human (σεσαρκωμένου τοῦ Λόγου καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντος), the Father was in the Son, and the Son in the Father, while the Son was a citizen (ἐνπολιτευομένου) among humans."[85] Furthermore, "So this, brethren, is what was being pointed out—that the mystery of the economy really was this very Word who fashioned (ἀπεργασάμενος) from the Holy Spirit and the virgin an only Son for God (ἕνα Υἱὸν Θεῷ)."[86]

The language of sonship in the passage is important for Hippolytus because it too indicates the incarnation of the Word as Son of God as the subject of the prophecy. In support of his argument, Hippolytus begins by noting that this is Jesus's own testimony concerning himself: "No one has ascended to heaven except the one who came down

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[83] *Noet.* 4.5 (Radde-Gallwitz, 62; Butterworth, 53).

[84] *Noet.* 4.6 (Radde-Gallwitz, 62; Butterworth, 53).

[85] *Noet.* 4.7 (Radde-Gallwitz, 62; Butterworth, 53).

[86] *Noet.* 4.8 (Butterworth, 52, 53). While Radde-Gallwitz identifies the Word as the subject of the verb ("that Word who . . . was made God's one Son" [62]), I believe Butterworth's translation better fits the argument in *Against Noetus* as well as the Christology of passages from the other writings discussed below. Note that ἀπεργάζομαι can carry the idea of causation, production, or perfection. See *PGL*, s.v. "ἀπεργάζομαι."

from heaven, namely, the Son of man who is in heaven" (John 3:13).[87] Furthermore, it is specifically with reference to the incarnation that the Word is identified as Son: "So what does [Noetus] require beyond what we have said? Surely he will not say that [the Word] was flesh while in heaven! In fact, it was flesh that was offered as a gift by the Father's Word and was displayed as perfect Son of God from the Spirit and the Virgin. It is clear then, that he offered himself to the Father."[88] While I will provide additional clarification to Hippolytus's controversial position on the Sonship of the Word in my analysis of subsequent sections of the treatise, his language in this section helps to clarify the way he uses the language of sonship. For Hippolytus, it is not a way of denying an eternal relationship between the Father and his Word but a way of affirming the revelatory significance of the human nature of Christ. As I will have opportunity to note several times, Hippolytus uses the language of sonship to identify the perfect humanity of Christ. As he further explains, the Word "took for himself the name that is common and widespread among humans, and was called this—'Son of Man'—from the beginning because of what was to happen, even though he was not yet human."[89] For Hippolytus, it is Jesus's offering of his own flesh as a gift to the Father that reveals him to be the perfect Son of God, and it is in his revelation as the perfect Son of God that Jesus comes to be known as the Word and Power of the Father.[90] The important point to grasp in Hippolytus's counter-interpretation is that he begins with Christ, the incarnate Word and Son of the Father, as the subject of the Scriptures and interprets the passage on the basis of that identification. In this way, he is able to demonstrate that the passage does not reveal the unity of God in the way that the Noetians imagine that it does.

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[87] *Noet.* 4.9 (Radde-Gallwitz, 62–63; Butterworth, 53).

[88] *Noet.* 4.10 (Radde-Gallwitz, 63; Butterworth, 53).

[89] *Noet.* 4.12 (Radde-Gallwitz, 63; Butterworth, 55).

[90] *Noet.* 4.11 (Radde-Gallwitz, 63; Butterworth, 55).

Counter-Interpretation of Baruch 3:36–38

After clarifying the meaning of Isaiah 45:14, Hippolytus turns to the citation from Baruch 3:36–38: "This is our God; no other shall be compared to him. He found out the entire way of knowledge and gave it to Jacob his son and to Israel his beloved. Afterwards he was seen on the earth and lived among human beings." Hippolytus begins by affirming that the reference to God in the passage indicates the Father, given his incomparability ("After all, who can be compared with the Father?"), but he immediately draws attention to the rest of the passage to demonstrate how it establishes that the Father can only be known through the incarnation of his Word as a human being.[91] For Hippolytus, the Father's testimony at Jesus's baptism, identifying him as his beloved Son clearly indicates that Jesus is the subject of the reference to "Jacob his son" and "Israel his beloved."[92] Jesus, as Hippolytus explains, is the "perfect Israel (τέλειος Ἰσραὴλ) and the "true Jacob" (ἀληθινὸς Ἰακώβ) who, having received all knowledge from the Father, "was seen on the earth and dwelt among human beings."[93] As the one with all knowledge from the Father, the Word has perfected human nature through his incarnation by becoming what humanity was created to be: "And who is Israel but a 'human who sees God'? But no one sees God except him alone who is son and perfect human who also alone declared the will of the Father."[94] For Hippolytus, the name *Israel* indicates what it means to be human, a reality that has been fulfilled in the son and perfect human (ὁ παῖς

[91] *Noet.* 5.1 (Radde-Gallwitz, 63; Butterworth, 55).

[92] *Noet.* 5.2 (Radde-Gallwitz, 63; Butterworth, 55, 57); cf. Matt 17:5.

[93] *Noet.* 5.3 (Radde-Gallwitz, 63; Butterworth, 57).

[94] *Noet.* 5.4 (Radde-Gallwitz, 63; Butterworth, 57). As Radde-Gallwitz notes, this etymology of the name "Israel" was common in early Christian literature (Radde-Gallwitz, 63n24); see also J. Z. Smith, "Prayer of Joseph: A New Translation with Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1983), 2:703.

καὶ τέλειος ἄνθρωπος), Jesus Christ.[95] As the perfect human being with all knowledge of the Father, Christ is therefore the one through whom the Father is made known, a point Hippolytus makes by reference to John's statement in his prologue, "No one has ever seen God. The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father—it is he who has declared him."[96] Critically, for Hippolytus's argument, the nature of God's self-revelation through the incarnation of the Word as a perfect human being requires a distinction between the one who reveals and the one who is revealed, thereby establishing the identity of Christ as the Word of the Father rather than the Father himself.

Counter-Interpretation of Romans 9:5

Hippolytus's final counter-interpretation addresses the Noetians' appeal to Romans 9:5, where the apostle Paul writes, "To them belong the fathers, from them comes Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all blessed forever." As in their other interpretations, the Noetians begin with a preconceived notion of divinity, in this case divine sovereignty, and then attempt to accommodate the revelation of Christ to that framework, ultimately feeling compelled to identify Christ with the Father. Hippolytus counters this interpretation by reversing the order of revelation, demonstrating how it is through the incarnation of the Word as a human being that the Father reveals his sovereignty.

For the Noetians, the concern is that affirming a distinction between Christ and the Father while also affirming the testimony of Scripture to Christ's sovereignty seems to imply the existence of two sovereigns, which would undermine the oneness of God.

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[95] Hippolytus's interpretation of the passage reflects the theological anthropology of Irenaeus, who famously explained, "For the glory of God is a living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God." Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.20.7 (*ANF* 1:490; SC 100.2.648).

[96] *Noet.* 5.5 (Radde-Gallwitz, 63; Butterworth, 57); cf. John 1:18. Hippolytus also cites John 3:13, 32: "The one who came down from heaven testifies to what he has heard and seen." *Noet.* 5.5 (Radde-Gallwitz, 63; Butterworth, 57).

For Hippolytus, however, Jesus's identity as the Word of God makes this a false dichotomy. As "blessed God" (θεὸς εὐλογητὸς) who eternally shares in the sovereignty of the Father as the Father's own Word, Jesus's sovereignty as a human being is nothing other than the visible revelation of the Father's own sovereignty.[97] Through an intertextual reading of Revelation 1:8, Matthew 11:27, and 1 Corinthians 15:23–28, Hippolytus demonstrates how the Father has revealed his sovereignty, subjecting all things to Christ and Christ to the Father so that "in all things only one God might appear" (ἵνα ἐν πᾶσιν εἷς Θεὸς φανῇ)."[98] As in his previous counter-interpretations, Hippolytus's response draws attention to how the Noetians fail to appreciate the incarnation of the Word as a human being as the definitive revelation of God and, therefore, the starting point for theology.

Hippolytus's counter-interpretation of Romans 9:5 is particularly important for his broader argument because of how he begins to articulate the unity of God at the end of the first part of the treatise. After citing several scriptural passages that further undermine the Noetians' personal identification of the Father and the Son, Hippolytus takes a preliminary step in explaining how the unity of God ought to be understood according to the Scriptures. He begins with Jesus's words in John 10:30 that he and the Father are one. Noting Jesus's use of the plural form of εἰμί ("I and the Father *are* (ἐσμέν) one."), he explains that Jesus's statement reveals "two persons (δύο πρόσωπα), but one power (δύναμιν μίαν)."[99]

To clarify what is meant by this unity of power, Hippolytus appeals to Jesus's words in John 17:22–23: "The glory which you gave to me, I have given to them, so that

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[97] *Noet.* 6.1 (Radde-Gallwitz, 64; Butterworth, 57).

[98] *Noet.* 6.4 (Radde-Gallwitz, 64; Butterworth, 59). To suppose that Hippolytus is making an argument for the eternal subordination of the Word to the Father would be to miss the point of his argument that it is through the incarnation that the single sovereignty of the one God is revealed.

[99] *Noet.* 7.1 (Radde-Gallwitz, 65; Butterworth, 61).

they might be one as we are one, I in them and you in me, so that the world might know that you sent me."[100] The nature of the unity that exists between believers serves to clarify the nature of the unity between Father and Son. Hippolytus explains that this unity does not consist in the unity of a single bodily substance but rather in "power (δυνάμει) and disposition of harmony (διαθέσει τῆς ὁμοφρονίας)."[101] Hippolytus's point is not to undermine the unique relationship of Father and Son, as he clarifies that Jesus does not merely share in the mind of the Father but *is* the "one mind of the Father" (εἷς γὰρ νοῦς Πατρὸς ὁ παῖς), such that for believers to have the Son is to have the mind of the Father.[102] Rather, Hippolytus's point is to demonstrate how it is through the perfect unity of Father and Son that God is revealed to be one. It is only through knowledge of the Son, who exists in perfect unity with the Father as the Father's own Mind, that human beings can know God as one.

Hippolytus summarizes the import of his counter-interpretations by referencing Jesus's post-resurrection conversation with Philip in John 14. He argues that the Noetians share in Philip's error by trying to know the Father apart from his revelation in Jesus. Attempting to read the Scriptures as a testimony to God apart from Christ, the Noetians have rejected the very means by which is possible to know the Father as He has revealed himself in the Scriptures. For Hippolytus, this reflects a failure to appreciate the revelatory significance of the incarnation as God's self-revelation in and through his human image. Elaborating on Jesus's words to Philip, Hippolytus explains, "In other words, 'If you have seen me, you would be able to know the Father through me. For through the image which is like him, the Father becomes readily knowable. But if you did

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[100] As cited in *Noet.* 7.2 (Radde-Gallwitz, 65; Butterworth, 61).

[101] *Noet.* 7.3 (Radde-Gallwitz, 65; Butterworth, 61).

[102] *Noet.* 7.3 (Radde-Gallwitz, 65; Butterworth, 61, 63).

not know the image, which is the Son, how is it that you wish to see the Father?'"[103]

Hippolytus ends the first part of the treatise with a restatement of the main point of his counter-interpretations and a preview of what he will demonstrate in the second part:

> So even an unwilling person is obliged to confess the Father as God Almighty, and Christ Jesus, the Son of God, as the God who became man—him to whom the Father subjected all things except himself—and the Holy Spirit; and that these really are three. But if he wants to learn how God is shown to be one, he must know that this [God] has a single Power; and that as far as the Power is concerned, God is one: but in terms of the economy the display [of it] is triple (τριχῆς)—as will be shown later when we give our account about the truth.[104]

Through his series of counter-interpretations, Hippolytus has established the basic hermeneutical paradigm that governs his approach to the controversy and the rejection of which constitutes the basis of the error of the Noetians. I will now turn to his demonstration of the truth to show how this basic conviction shapes his reading of Scripture and his theological conclusions.

Hippolytus's Demonstration of the Truth

Hippolytus begins the second part of *Against Noetus* with a summary of the truth that he aims to demonstrate. While this summary has often been understood to represent a speculation about the pre-incarnate existence of the Word, I will argue that it reflects his insistence that "there is one God, whom we come to know from no other source, brothers, than the holy scriptures," received as a testimony to the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.[105] I begin by citing the passage in its entirety:

> God, who alone exists and has nothing contemporaneous with himself, chose to create a world—by conceiving this world in his mind, willing it, and uttering it, he made it. Immediately what came into being is present to him as he willed it, which

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[103] *Noet.* 7.6 (Radde-Gallwitz, 65; Butterworth, 63).

[104] *Noet*. 8.1–2 (Radde-Gallwitz, 66; Butterworth, 65).

[105] *Noet.* 9.1 (Radde-Gallwitz, 66; Butterworth, 67).

> he completed just as he had willed it. Therefore, it is sufficient for us to know this alone—that nothing was contemporaneous with God except that he himself was. But though he was alone (μόνος), he was many (πολὺς). For he was neither without word nor without wisdom nor without power nor without counsel. But all things were in him and he was the all. When he willed, just as he willed, he showed forth (ἔδειξεν) his Word at determined times as being with him. Through him he made all things. When he wills, he makes; when he ponders, he brings to completion; when he utters, he shows forth; when he fashions, he shows his wisdom (σοφίζεται). After all, all things that come into being he crafts through Word and wisdom, creating by the Word and ordering by wisdom. So then, he made as he willed, for he was God. He begot the Word as the leader of things that come into being and his counselor and workman. This Word which he has in himself and is invisible to the created world, he makes visible. Uttering him as the first sound and begetting him as light from light, he sent forth his own mind as the lord of creation, which was previously visible to him alone. Though he was invisible to the world that comes into being, he made him visible, so that seeing him through his appearance, the world might be able to be saved.[106]

To understand how Hippolytus's summary aligns with his argument in the first part of the treatise, it is important to remember that his position represents a moderating position between the views of Callistus and the author of the *Refutation*. Hippolytus's self-professed goal, in this regard, is to establish the monarchy of the Father on the basis of the economy revealed in Christ according to the Scriptures. This requires that he demonstrate how the scriptural testimony to the distinction between the Father and his Word does not make the latter a second god, subordinate deity, or divine emanation.

With this in mind, I want to draw attention to several aspects of Hippolytus's summary that mitigate against the common interpretation of the passage. First, the opening statement of Hippolytus's summary establishes creation as the direct, immediate work of God. For Hippolytus, the creation of the world does not require the emanation of a subordinate deity who can act as an intermediary between God and the world. It is God himself who conceives of the world in his own mind, who wills it, and who speaks it into existence.

Second, Hippolytus's summary establishes the eternal relationship of God with his Word. In explaining that though God was alone he was many, Hippolytus argues that

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[106] *Noet.* 10.1–4 (Radde-Gallwitz, 66–67; Butterworth, 69).

it is inconceivable that God was ever bereft of his word, wisdom, power, or counsel. Any concept of God, for Hippolytus, must include these realities. The implication that these are intrinsic to God's very being rules out the possibility that the Word's generation involves any division or separation within God. Furthermore, the unity of God is such that his diversity admits no separation between the activity of God and the activity of the Word in creation. It is one and the same God who creates the world through his Word.[107]

Third, Hippolytus's summary establishes the eternal Word of God as the subject of the incarnation. The Word which God has in himself is, as Hippolytus explains, invisible to the created world, unknowable to creation apart from his visible manifestation in the flesh. This point is especially important since it demonstrates that Hippolytus's summary, which begins with the eternal existence of Father and Word, does not represent a point of speculation apart from what has been revealed in the incarnation. This is consistent with Hippolytus's argument in the first part of the treatise, in which he condemns the Noetians for seeking to know God from a different starting point.

Fourth, Hippolytus's summary establishes the logical priority of the incarnation with regard to God's creation of the world. Trying to read his summary as a chronological biography of the Word who in a pre-incarnate state was used to create the world and who subsequently took on flesh obscures Hippolytus's point that the one revealed as the Word of God is the one through whom God creates the world. The attempt to read the summary as a pre-incarnate/post-incarnate biography reading assumes far too sharp a distinction between creation and incarnation.[108] In Hippolytus's summary, both

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[107] Hippolytus reflects the theology of Irenaeus, for whom the mutual indwelling of the Father and his Word and Wisdom preserves the divine unity, admitting of no division between the three. On this aspect of Irenaeus's theology, see D. Jeffrey Bingham, "Himself within Himself : The Father and His Hands in Early Christianity," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 47, no. 2 (2005): 137–51.

[108] Brent assumes a sharp distinction between creation and incarnation in this section, arguing that Hippolytus's use of νοῦς and σοφία "constitutes a far greater concession to emanation theory in connection with the relation of the pre-existent Christ to the Father than ever Justin, Irenaeus, or any other

are implicated in the same divine act. Indeed, the import of Hippolytus's summary is that it is *through* the incarnation of the Word that God creates the world. In this regard, it is notable how Hippolytus uses the present participial form of *ginomai* to describe creation. While Andrew Radde-Gallwitz chooses to translate this passage as "things that come into being," it could just as well be translated as "things that are coming into being." It is into a world that is coming into being that God reveals his Word as creation's leader, counselor, and workman, suggesting that what Hippolytus means by the salvific revelation of his Word is the Father's completion of the creation of the world in his Son.

With these clarifying points in mind, one can appreciate how Hippolytus's summary is consistent with the argument he has already made in the first part of the treatise. It also enables readers to appreciate the way in which his argument unfolds in the second part of the treatise. In what remains, Hippolytus will draw on a variety of scriptural passages to argue that the unity of God, understood as a unity of power, can only be understood by beginning with Jesus as the subject of the Scriptures. While Hippolytus's argument is circuitous, this basic conviction provides continuity to the remainder of his argument.

The Visible Will of the Father

In the three sections that follow (*Noet.* 11.3–13.4), Hippolytus elaborates his position by demonstrating how the Scriptures reveal God to be Father, Word, and Spirit through their testimony to the Son, who is the visible will of the Father. His argument can be summarized in three parts: (1) the Father, as the All, has created through his will; (2) the Father has revealed his will in the Scriptures through the Holy Spirit; and (3) the Scriptures testify to Jesus as the visible will of the Father.

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of the Fathers of the second century had been prepared to concede, in the process of refuting the Monarchian positions of Zephyrinus and Callistus." Brent, *Hippolytus and Roman Church in Third Century*, 70–71.

Hippolytus begins the first part of his argument by establishing that the Father is the All. He clarifies that his summary of the incarnation does not imply the existence of multiple gods. Rather, it is as light from light or water from a fountain or a ray from the sun that the Word comes to stand alongside the Father, not as a separate god but as the "one power which is from the All."[109] For Hippolytus, the Father is the All and the Word is the Father's own power that comes from him. Because the Word is the uncreated power of the All, the incarnation of the Word in no way jeopardizes the divine monarchy. As Hippolytus explains, "Now the All is Father, the power from him is the Word. This is the mind, which, when it went forth in the world, was shown to be child of God (παῖς θεοῦ). So, all things exist through him, but he alone is from the Father. Therefore, who is declaring a multitude of gods vying with each other in different times?"[110] Hippolytus further argues that all must acknowledge that the All is reducible to one. Even heretics such as Valentinus, Marcion, and Cerinthus, despite their refusal to confess one cause of all things, undermine their own views in affirming that God creates according to his singular will.[111]

Hippolytus then turns to the second part of his argument by explaining how the

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[109] *Noet.* 11.1 (Radde-Gallwitz, 67; Butterworth, 71). On this use of the image of light in early Christianity, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Light of the World: A Basic Image in Early Christian Thought* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1962). As Katsos has argued, the celebrated formula "light from light" was regarded by early Christians not as a chance metaphor but as an "illustration derived directly from Scripture itself" and that "by the mid-third century, Christian thinkers had already developed a unified and coherent exegesis of God as light based on a systematic reading of Scripture." Isidoros Charalampos Katsos, "'Light from Light': The Metaphysics of Light of the Early Church," in *T&T Clark Handbook of the Early Church*, ed. Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, J. A. McGuckin, and Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski (New York: T&T Clark, 2022), 467. For example, see Origen's compilation and discussion of relevant scriptural passages in *Princ.* 1.1.1–2, 6; 1.2.4–11 (SC 252.90–94, 98–104, 116–40). To understand how this image functioned within early Christian theology, Katsos also reminds readers that "the trinitarian theology of the early church was articulated in the philosophical context of Hellenistic and late antique metaphysics of light." Katsos, "'Light from Light,'" 476. Within this framework, the image of light functioned as an analogical metaphor, that is, as a means for Christians to talk meaningfully about imperceptible realities. The image of light has occupied a preeminent place in Christian vocabulary since, as Kostas explains, "light, as the special object of sight, guarantees immediate access to the world of the senses," thus becoming "the most powerful perceptual metaphor that human language can produce" (Katsos, 480).

[110] *Noet.* 11.1–3 (Radde-Gallwitz, 67; Butterworth, 71).

[111] *Noet.* 11.3 (Radde-Gallwitz, 67; Butterworth, 71).

Father has given the law and the prophets through the Holy Spirit, "so that upon receiving inspiration from the paternal power, they declared the intention and will of the Father (ὅπως τῆς πατρώας δυνάμεως ἀπόπνοιαν λαβόντες)."[112] According to Hippolytus, it was in this way that the Word bore witness to himself in the prophets, declaring beforehand his manifestation in the flesh.[113] Likewise, the apostolic testimony sums up what is revealed in the law and the prophets, a point Hippolytus makes by citing John's identification in his prologue of Jesus as the one who in the beginning was the Word, who was with God and who was God. The third part of Hippolytus's argument represents the logical conclusion based on the two points he has already established. If in creating through his Word, the Father has created through his own will, and if the Scriptures identify Jesus as the Word of God, then Jesus is the visible revelation of the will of God, through whom all things come into being.[114]

Hippolytus's argument in these sections constitutes the argument of the treatise in miniature. Rather than assuming an abstract notion of divine unity and then trying to accommodate Jesus to that preconceived notion, Hippolytus demonstrates how the unity of God has been revealed through Jesus as the subject of the Scriptures. Through the apostolic preaching of Christ according to the law and the prophets, Jesus is revealed as the Word and Will of the Father, the one who makes known the Father according to the testimony of the Spirit in the Scriptures. In this way, the unity of God is known according to the economy of Father, Word, and Spirit through the revelation of the mystery of the economy, the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Through the economic activity of Father, Word, and Spirit in the incarnation, the Father is revealed as the All: "It is through him

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[112] *Noet.* 11.4 (Radde-Gallwitz, 67–68; Butterworth, 71).

[113] *Noet.* 12.1 (Butterworth, 70, 71).

[114] *Noet.* 13.4 (Butterworth, 74, 75). According to Zani, the Hippolytus's understanding of the divine will is central to his argument because it guarantees intra-divine unity without suppressing the personal distinction between Father and Word. Zani, *La Cristologia di Ippolito*, 8.

that we get the idea of the Father, but it is in the Son that we believe, and by the Holy Spirit that we adore."[115] It is in this way, Hippolytus argues, that the Scriptures testify to one God who is known through his visible Word.

One God, Two Persons, and Three Economies

Having summarized the testimony of Scripture in this way, Hippolytus turns again to the objection that such a scheme implies the existence of two gods (δύο θεούς). Rejecting such a notion, he suggests a different vocabulary to account for the way Scripture speaks of divine unity and distinction: "I shall not say two gods, but one, though two persons and a third economy, the grace of the Holy Spirit. For there is one Father, but two persons, because there is also the Son—and the third, Holy Spirit."[116] Hippolytus's vocabulary is prone to misinterpretation if judged by the standards of later centuries. One must be careful to evaluate it within the context of the christological conflict of which Hippolytus was actually a party and not those of subsequent generations. With that in mind, several things can be noted. First, Hippolytus clearly affirms the monarchy of the Father by rejecting the notion of two gods and by subsequently identifying the Father with the one God. Second, to speak about the distinction within the divine unity, Hippolytus proposes the language of *prosōpon*. To appreciate what he means by this term, it is important to remember his identification of the Son as the *visible* Word of the Father.[117] The language of *prosōpon* serves Hippolytus's purpose of distinguishing between the Father and the Word through whom the Father has revealed himself. Hippolytus is not using the term in the more developed

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[115] *Noet.* 12.5 (Butterworth, 72, 73).

[116] *Noet.* 14.2 (Radde-Gallwitz, 68; Butterworth, 75).

[117] As I have already demonstrated, visibility is central to Hippolytus's understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son, reflecting Irenaeus's principle that the Father is the invisible of the Son, and the Son is the visible of the Father. See Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.6.6 (SC 100.2.450).

way of later centuries to speak about the eternal relations of the three persons of the Trinity but in a more generic sense to explain how the Father has revealed himself through the Son.[118] As Hippolytus's earlier appeal to the images of light and water helps to clarify, the Son and the Father do not represent separate objects of knowledge. Rather, the Son, as the very Word of the Father, is the revelation of the Father. Understanding Hippolytus's use of *prosōpon* in this way helps to clarify his reason for not applying that term to the Holy Spirit, choosing instead to speak of a third economy (οἰκονομίαν τρίτην). This is because the Spirit's role within the divine economy is to bear witness to the Son and, through the Son, the Father, by giving understanding to those who believe.

Instead of understanding the unity of God in terms of the personal identification of Father and Son, Hippolytus reiterates his understanding of divine unity as a unity of power revealed through the economic harmony of Father, Son, and Spirit, through the mystery of the economy, Jesus Christ.[119] In this section, however, he draws more attention to the revelatory significance of the obedience of Christ. Hippolytus explains, "The Father commands, the Word accomplishes and is shown as the Son through whom the Father is believed. In an economy of harmony (οἰκονομίᾳ συμφωνίας) he is joined together with the one God."[120] For Hippolytus, the revelation of the economic harmony of Father, Son and Spirit centers around the obedience of the Son to the Father's command. It is through the perfect obedience of the Son to the Father, which reveals the perfect harmony Father, Son, and Spirit, that God is revealed as one:

After all, there is one God. For the one who commands is Father, the one who obeys

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[118] Litfin's suggestion that Tertullian uses *persona* in a way that corresponds to the Stoic notion of "disposition" (a way something exists as encountered by humans) and "relative disposition" (how something exists in relationship to other things) is perhaps applicable here. Bryan M. Litfin, "Tertullian on the Trinity," *Perichoresis* 17, no. 1 (2019): 93.

[119] As Kelly notes, it is especially in his effort to explicate the unity of God in terms of divine power and the distinction between Father and Son in terms of *person* that Hippolytus develops the tradition he had received from Irenaeus. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 114.

[120] *Noet.* 14.4 (Radde-Gallwitz, 68; Butterworth, 75).

> is Son, and that which brings understanding is Holy Spirit. The one who is Father is over all things, the Son is through all things, and the Holy Spirit is in all things. We cannot understand the one God in any other way besides really believing in Father and Son and Holy Spirit.[121]

Through his obedience as a human being to the Father in the life of the Spirit, the Son makes visible the economic harmony of Father, Son, and Spirit by which the unity of God can be known. As Hippolytus further clarifies, it is only in acknowledging the one God as Father, Son, and Spirit that one can truly glorify him. Thus, as he explains, the Jews glorified the Father, but did not give him thanks (cf. Rom 1:21) because they failed to acknowledge the Son. The disciples acknowledged the Son but not in the Holy Spirit, and so they denied him.[122] This signifies for Hippolytus that it is only through the apostolic preaching of the gospel according to the Scriptures that God can be glorified as Father, Son, and Spirit through the revelation of the paternal Word. In this way, Hippolytus demonstrates how Noetus's claim to glorify the Son by identifying him with the Father is fundamentally misguided, since it rejects the Father's own way of glorifying himself as testified in the Scriptures:

> Therefore, knowing the economy and the Father's will and that the Father wanted to be glorified in no other way than this, the paternal Word, having risen, handed it over to his disciples, saying, "Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," showing that everyone who lacks any of these shall not glorify God completely. Indeed, through this Trinity (τριάδος) the Father is glorified. For the Father willed, the Son did, the Spirit manifested it. Therefore, all the scriptures preach about this.[123]

For Hippolytus, it is only through the Spirit-filled apostolic proclamation of the visible will of the Father, Jesus Christ, that the one true God can be properly glorified according to the economy by which he has revealed himself.

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[121] *Noet.* 14.5–6 (Radde-Gallwitz, 68; Butterworth, 75, 77); cf. Eph 4:6.

[122] *Noet.* 14.6 (Radde-Gallwitz, 68; Butterworth, 77).

[123] *Noet.* 14.7–8 (Radde-Gallwitz, 68; Butterworth, 77).

The Perfect Son

After demonstrating how it is through the Trinity that the Father is glorified, Hippolytus anticipates an objection: "'But,' someone will say to me, 'you are bringing in something strange to me when you call the Son 'Word.' Yes, John says 'Word,' but he has a different, figurative meaning (ἀλλ'ἄλλως ἀλληγορεῖ)."[124] The argument implied in the objection is that Hippolytus's application of the term *Logos* to the Son is inconsistent with John's application of it. The argument of Hippolytus's opponents is that rather than applying the term to establish a personal distinction between Father and Son, John uses the term figuratively to describe the Father's revelation of himself through his incarnation.

Hippolytus rejects this explanation by appealing to several passages of Scripture, synthesizing their testimony to establish the identity of the Son as the Word. The first is John's own testimony in Revelation to the robe of the Word sprinkled with blood, which Hippolytus understands as a reference to the flesh "through which even the impassible Word of God (ἀπαθὴς τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγος) underwent suffering."[125] The suffering of the Word was foretold by the prophets, including the prophet Micah, who spoke of God's people stripping him of his glory.[126] But this suffering in the flesh is none other than the suffering of the Son, as the apostle Paul has made clear in his identification of Christ as God's own Son who was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh so that he might condemn sin in the flesh. Thus, according to the testimony of the Scriptures, it is none other than the Word that God has sent down as his own Son.[127]

In what follows, Hippolytus restates his controversial opinion that the Word is

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[124] *Noet*. 15.1 (Radde-Gallwitz, 68; Butterworth, 77).

[125] *Noet.* 15.3 (Radde-Gallwitz, 69; Butterworth, 79); cf. Rev 19:11–13.

[126] *Noet.* 15.4 (Radde-Gallwitz, 69; Butterworth, 79).

[127] *Noet.* 15.5–6 (Radde-Gallwitz, 69; Butterworth, 79); cf. Rom 8:3–4.

not Son apart from his incarnation. But having traced Hippolytus's line of argumentation, we are in a better position to consider the rationale behind his hesitation and the role it plays within his broader argument.

> So then, which one did God send down as "his own Son" (Υἱὸν ἑαυτοῦ) through the flesh other than the Word, whom he titled "Son" because this is what he was going to become? And in being called "Son," he took on the common name for tender affection among humans (τὸ κοινὸν ὄνομα τῆς εἰς ἀνθρώπους φιλοστοργίας). For it was not as fleshless and on his own (ἄσαρκος καὶ καθ'ἑαυτὸν) that the Word was perfect Son (τέλειος . . . Υἱός), even though being Word he was perfect Only-begotten (τέλειος . . . μονογενής). Nor could the flesh subsist on its own without the Word since it had its constitution in the Word (οὔθ'ἡ σὰρξ καθ'ἑαυτὴν δίχα τοῦ λόγου ὑποστῆναι ἠδύνατο διὰ τὸ ἐν λόγῳ τὴν σύστασιν ἔχειν). It was in this way, then, that one, perfect Son of God was manifested.[128]

Several notes can be made with regard to Hippolytus's explanation. First, the immediate context of the passage clarifies that his purpose is to identify the Word and Son as the one person Jesus Christ. The argument to which he is responding is that the term *Logos* is just a figural way of identifying Jesus as the Father incarnate. Hippolytus's response is to demonstrate from the Scriptures how the Son is identified not as the Father but as his Word.

Second, a consideration of Hippolytus's apocalyptic exegesis in the previous chapter and his application of it in *Against Noetus* should shape how one understands the proleptic nature of the Word's identification as Son. When Hippolytus argues that the Word is titled "Son" in light of what he would become, this is Hippolytus's way of simultaneously identifying the incarnate Word as the subject of the Scriptures while also acknowledging that the one revealed as Son is made known as the Father's own Word, whose existence does not depend on the flesh assumed in his incarnation. By explaining that the Word was not perfect Son apart from the flesh, he is not suggesting, as some scholars have suggested, a deficiency in the Word's eternal filial relationship with the Father. As Hippolytus explicitly states, the Word is always perfect Only Begotten (λέλειος

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[128] *Noet.* 15.6–7 (Radde-Gallwitz, 69; Butterworth, 79, 81).

μονογενής).[129] Hippolytus's point, rather, is to identify the fullness and perfection of humanity that has come to subsist in the Word through his manifestation as perfect Son. The incarnation does not represent a development within the eternal relationship of Father and Word but a development within the relationship of Father and humanity through the incarnation of the Word as perfect Son of the Father.

Third, Hippolytus's understanding of the Sonship of the Word reemphasizes the point that he has made throughout the treatise, namely that it is through his revelation as a perfect human being that Christ is revealed as the Father's own Word. As Hippolytus stated in his summary at the beginning of the second part of the treatise, apart from the incarnation the Word is just a sound, known only to the Father. But in his revelation as the perfect human being, the perfect image and Son of God, the Word of God has been made known, and in being made known, has revealed the Father.

This basic conviction about the revelatory significance of the incarnation is evident in the next objection that Hippolytus anticipates. Recognizing that the idea of the Word's generation from the Father is objectionable to some, provoking them to ask for an explanation of how the Word was begotten, he responds by drawing attention to the enigma of human birth. Noting how one is unable to explain the economy of human generation despite witnessing the birth of human beings, one must be content with knowing through what can be visibly observed that a human being is a work of God (ὅτι ἔργον θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος).[130] In the same way, one cannot speculate about the paternal generation of the Word but must be content with what can be known from his visible manifestation in the flesh: "Truly, is it not enough for you to learn that God made the world? Are you even so bold as to inquire where it came from? Or is it not enough for

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[129] *Noet.* 15.7 (Radde-Gallwtiz, 69; Butterworth, 81). As Zani explains, the singular identity of the Word as Only Begotten means that the subsequent expansion of God's fatherhood in its embrace of humanity in the incarnation hinges on the Word. Zani, *La Cristologia di Ippolito*, 154.

[130] *Noet.* 16.3–4 (Radde-Gallwitz, 69; Butterworth, 81, 83).

you to learn that the Son of God was manifested for your salvation, provided that you believe? Are you even prying into how he was begotten according to the Spirit?"[131]

The spiritual mystery of the Word's generation, being known only to the Father and his Word, is a mystery that will only be made known once the Father chooses to reveal it to those who are "holy and worthy to see his face."[132] The vision of this mystery depends on the maturation of human beings into the fullness of the image of God through the Son, who is the one who sees God. As this can only take place as believers behold the visible image of God in Christ, Hippolytus asserts that believers must be content with Jesus's own testimony about himself as the fulfillment of what has been revealed about the generation of the Word in the Scriptures.[133]

The Perfect Human Being

Hippolytus concludes his argument by reflecting on the significance of the identity of Christ from the perspective of the soteriological tradition handed down by the apostles, demonstrating how the human-divine life of the Son accomplishes the salvation of men. If Hippolytus's comments in section 10 about the salvation of the world being accomplished through its vision of its creator in the incarnate Word were understood in isolation, they might give the impression that he understands salvation purely in aesthetic terms, suggesting that the salvific efficacy of the incarnation consists entirely in its facilitation of a visible revelation of the Father. Related to this is the way in which Hippolytus's references to the flesh of the Word might be assumed to indicate that he does not believe the totality of human nature to be assumed by the Word in his incarnation but only its bodily dimension. Hippolytus's concluding remarks clarify that

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[131] *Noet.* 16.5–6 (Radde-Gallwitz, 69–70; Butterworth, 83).

[132] *Noet.* 16.6 (Radde-Gallwitz, 70; Butterworth, 83).

[133] *Noet.* 16.7 (Radde-Gallwitz, 70; Butterworth, 83).

neither of these is the case and, in so doing, serve as an important lens through which to understand his argument throughout the treatise.

After noting how the testimony of Scripture only suffices for those who by faith share in the Spirit, Hippolytus encourages his readers to receive their testimony in accordance with the tradition of the apostles (παράδοσιν τῶν ἀποστόλων). He summarizes that tradition as follows: "That God the Word (Θεὸς Λόγος) came down from heaven to the holy Virgin Mary, so that, after taking flesh from her, and receiving a human soul (I mean a rational one), and being born human in all the many ways there are except sin, he might save the fallen Adam and grant incorruptibility to humans who believe in his name."[134] For Hippolytus, this understanding of the salvific nature of the incarnation, as handed down in apostolic tradition, requires both the full divinity and the full humanity of the Word. It is "God the Word" who takes flesh from the holy Mother, and it is the full composition of the human person, body and soul, that he takes as his own.[135] In his birth as a human being, the Word receives all that makes one human.

The salvific efficacy of the incarnation, then, is understood through the union of God and man in Jesus Christ. Specifically, it is through this union that God saves fallen humanity by granting them a participation in the incorruptibility of his Word. Through the incarnation, the Word of God has come to share in the fullness of humanity in order that, through the union effected in his own flesh, humanity might come to share in his own incorruptibility by faith in him.

As Hippolytus goes on to explain, the salvation of fallen Adam achieved in the

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[134] *Noet.* 17.2 (Radde-Gallwitz, 70; Butterworth, 85). The Greek text for Hippolytus's description of the Word's human soul is as follows: λαβὼν δὲ καὶ ψυχὴν τὴν ἀνθρωπείαν, λογικὴν δὲ λέγω.

[135] As Kelly notes, despite several passages which seem to imply that the Word simply assumed flesh in the manner of a habiliment, Hippolytus understood the incarnation in a full sense, with "flesh" connoting "human nature in its integrity, without raising the question of a rational soul, and referred to the divine element in Christ as 'spirit.'" Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 149–50. Furthermore, citing the peroration in *Noet.* 18, he argues that Hippolytus had a firmer grasp on the dual nature of Christ than most of his predecessors.

incarnation is not merely a reaction to the fall but serves to accomplish the purpose for which humanity was created, that is, to bear the image of God. In other words, salvation is understood as the completion, the perfection, of God's creation of humanity in his image. This understanding of the economy is the import of his comments that follow:

> So in the very same way in which he was proclaimed, he became present as well, and manifested himself by becoming a new man (καινὸς ἄνθρωπος) from the virgin and the Holy Spirit. While, as Word, he has the heavenly element (οὐράνιον) that he gets from his Father, he has the earthly element (ἐπίγειον) he gets by taking flesh from the old Adam through the virgin. This is he who went forth into the world and was manifested as God embodied (Θεὸς ἐνσώματος), going forth as perfect man (ἄνθρωπος τέλειος)—for he truly became man, and not just in appearance or figuratively speaking.[136]

From the perspective of this soteriology, it is possible to step back and appreciate what this means for Hippolytus's understanding of the identity of Christ. As the perfect human being, who unites within himself the heavenly and the earthly, the divine and the human, the Word is revealed as the image of God in which humanity is being renewed. The motive behind Hippolytus's emphasis on the humanity of the Son, which I have traced throughout his argument, takes on a new clarity. Behind Hippolytus's emphasis of this reality is a robust theological anthropology that understands the human being as the image through which God has chosen to reveal himself. Thus, the incarnate Word is simultaneously the revelation of what it means to be God and what it means to be human.[137] The perfect human being is the embodiment of God.

In the celebratory peroration that closes the treatise, Hippolytus celebrates how the Word did not "disown what was human about himself," but as God endured the fullness of human weakness, suffering, and death, sharing in the plight of humanity so

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[136] *Noet*. 17.4 (Butterworth, 86, 87).

[137] As Zani explains, Jesus's death on the cross, as the supreme act of human obedience, reveals the nature of salvation as the recovery of humanity's existence through the union of Spirit and flesh and the elevation of the latter to the level of immortal or incorruptible flesh. Zani, *La Cristologia di Ippolito*, 9.

that they might share in his divine glory.[138] The climactic moment in all of this, for Hippolytus, is the cross, wherein through the fullness of human weakness Christ displays the fullness of divine glory:

> For his sake the sun is darkened, the day has no light, the rocks are rent, the veil is torn apart, the foundations of the earth are shaken, tombs are opened, and the dead are raised up, and the chief powers are deeply shamed. For on the Cross they beheld him who sets the universe in order, and his eyes are closed; and when creation saw that he had given up the Spirit, it was deep disturbed, and in its inability to take in his suberabounding glory, it grew dark.[139]

For Hippolytus, it is not just that Jesus reveals what it means to be God as a human being, but that he reveals what it means to be God in the way he dies as a human being. As I have demonstrated already from the treatise, it is specifically through the obedience of the Son that Hippolytus understands him to reveal the unity of God as a unity of power. Accordingly, for Hippolytus, it is the Son's ultimate act of obedience in offering up his body to the Father that becomes the climactic moment in God's revelation of his power.[140] God's self-revelation, then, is imbued by the cross with a profound sense of irony, in that God's divine power is revealed in human weakness. Nevertheless, it is through the cross, as Hippolytus explains, that Christ has come to share in the sovereignty of the Father: "This is God who became man on our behalf—he to whom the Father subjected all things."[141]

Conclusion

The controversy that motivated Hippolytus to write *Against Noetus* centered around the question of the unity of God. The Noetians claimed to understand the oneness

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[138] *Noet.* 18.1–10 (Butterworth, 86–93).

[139] *Noet.* 18.8 (Butterworth, 90, 91).

[140] On Hippolytus's understanding of Christ's death on the cross as the ultimate act of obedience, see *Ben. Is. Jac.* (PO 27.18, 20).

[141] *Noet.* 18.10 (Butterworth, 92, 93).

of God apart from Christ, and Hippolytus's treatise responds by demonstrating that the oneness of God can only be known by beginning with Christ. In the first part of the treatise, Hippolytus exposes the basic error of the Noetians in failing to discern Christ as the mystery of the economy revealed in the Scriptures. In the second part, he demonstrates how Christ, as the mystery of the economy, reveals the unity of God.

In turning to Christ as the subject of the Scriptures, Hippolytus is compelled to reject the Noetians' effort to establish the unity of God by identifying the Father as the Son. Instead, Hippolytus understands the revelation of the Father through the Son according to the testimony of the Spirit in the Scriptures to reveal the unity of God as a unity of power. Indeed, for Hippolytus, the Son is the very power of the Father. The implication of this perspective, within Hippolytus's perspective, is that divine power can no longer be abstracted from Christ, since Christ is the revelation of God's single power.

How is Christ revealed as the power of God? For Hippolytus, it is through his submission and perfect obedience to the Father that he is revealed as such. Through his perfect obedience to the Father, Christ reveals the economic harmony of Father, Son, and Spirit through which God is known as the sovereign Creator of the world. The climactic moment in this revelation is the cross, through which Christ offers up his body to the Father in death. Far from obscuring the power of God, for Hippolytus the cross represents the definitive revelation of God's power as the Creator because it is through the obedience of Christ on the cross that humanity, God's special work of creation, is made alive in Christ. The cross, thus, requires a radical re-envisioning of divine power as a power revealed in human weakness. In the next two chapters, I will consider how this cruciform vision of divine power shapes Hippolytus's understanding of church and empire as rival images of divine power.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHURCH AS IMAGE OF DIVINE POWER

For Hippolytus, the mystery of Christ is, at its core, a mystery of unity. In *Against Noetus*, he demonstrates how Jesus, as the image of God, reveals the unity of God through his human-divine life, as testified by the Spirit in the Scriptures. This unity, for Hippolytus, is fundamentally a unity of power, made manifest through Jesus's perfect obedience as the Son of God—an obedience that culminates in his passion on the cross. Through the cross, God's singular power as Creator is fully revealed.

The cross, in Hippolytus's understanding of the church and divine power, serves as the means by which God unites humanity to himself in the one body of Christ, recreating humanity in his one image. The power of the cross as the instrument of creation, therefore, continues to be revealed in the life of the church. In this chapter, I argue that for Hippolytus, the church—through its participation in the power of the cross—is constituted by God as the image of his power. To develop this argument, I will build on the previous chapter by examining more deeply Hippolytus's understanding of how the cross effects creation and how this power is recapitulated in the church through its participation in the cross.

The Cross as the Paradigm of Divine Power

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul famously explains that the division between Israel and the Gentiles has been abolished in the body of Christ through the cross:

> For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man (ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον) in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. (Eph 2:14–16)

To properly understand the significance of Paul's statement, it is necessary to appreciate that early Christians understood nationhood theologically.[1] The Scriptures profoundly shaped the early Christian political imagination by presenting nations not as part of the original order of creation, but as a historical development resulting from human idolatry.[2] While the story of Babel portrays the origin of nations as an act of divine intervention, the story as a whole recognizes this as a gracious divine accommodation to human folly rather than an ideal (Gen 11:1–9). Nationhood represents a fracturing of the unity of humanity created in God's image and, as such, cannot remain a permanent state of affairs.

Early Christians came to understand the gospel as a fulfillment of God's plan to restore humanity to its intended unity. The revelation of John envisions the dissolution of national boundaries within a universal community comprising all nations, tribes, peoples, and languages (Rev 5:9; 7:9). The miraculous gift of *glossolalia* in Acts 2:1–11 reverses the division at Babel in its transcendence of linguistic differences. And in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, as cited above, the gospel is understood to overcome the deepest of all human divisions (Paul speaks of two human beings), the division between Israel and the Gentiles.

The passage from Ephesians cited above highlights how God has accomplished this reunion, namely through the creation of a new humanity in the body of Christ on the cross. This theme was picked up and carried by early Christian writers. As Joseph Ratzinger explains in his examination of the theme of unity in the church fathers, this perspective was central to early Christian theology:

This declaration provided the Fathers with the basic idea for their understanding of

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[1] György Geréby, "The Nation, the Nations, and the Third Nation: The Political Essence of Early Christianity," in *Theology and World Politics: Metaphysics, Genealogies, Political Theologies*, ed. Vassilios Paipais (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 184.

[2] Geréby, "Nation, the Nations, and Third Nation," 188–90.

> the mystery of Christ. Unity was not just one among other themes here but rather the leitmotiv of the whole. This is evident first of all from the fact that sin appears as a mystery of division. Thanks to its workings humanity's original unity was shattered into many pieces—that is, into individuals mutually opposed to each other. . . . The mystery of Christ, which abolishes sin, was consequently understandable here as a mystery of reunification.[3]

Hippolytus shares this early Christian understanding of the cross as the means by which God is reuniting his fractured image in the body of Christ. Like his theological forebearers, Hippolytus understands the unity of humanity, by which it reflects the unity of God, as an eschatological reality accomplished and revealed in Christ through the cross. To better understand Hippolytus's perspective on the cross as the paradigm of divine power, according to which the church is being conformed, I will demonstrate how the cross, as the instrument of creation, reveals the power of God through its unifying force. My argument proceeds as follows. First, I highlight Hippolytus's understanding of the cross as the pivotal event in God's creation of his human image. Second, I demonstrate how the cross's accomplishment of the union of flesh and Spirit in the body of Christ represents the goal and fulfillment of creation. Third, I note how the achievement of this unity qualifies the cross as the paradigm of God's power.

The Cross as God's Creation of His Human Image

To grasp Hippolytus's understanding of the cross as the definitive revelation of divine power, it is necessary to step back and examine how he situates the cross within his broader understanding of the world's history and ultimate destiny. As I demonstrated in chapter 2, Hippolytus conceptualizes the history of the world as the unfolding of the mind and will of God along both a horizontal temporal axis and an ontological vertical axis, according to which earthly things correspond to heavenly images and models.[4]

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[3] Joseph Ratzinger, *The Unity of the Nations: A Vision of the Church Fathers*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 24.

[4] Cf. *Comm. Dan.* 1.18.2 (Schmidt, 46; GCSNF 7:40, 42).

Hippolytus envisions the destiny of the world as a transition from earthly things to heavenly things through the revelation of the eternal heavenly kingdom of God.[5] By the cessation of earthly things, Hippolytus does not mean the dissolution of material reality but its union with the heavenly.

In book 4 of the *Commentary on Daniel*, Hippolytus fills out this picture of the world in a way that places the cross at the very center of God's plan for creation. He explains how the history of the world has been typologically foreshadowed in the days of creation in Genesis 1, with each day corresponding to a millennium, ultimately culminating in the Sabbath rest of the kingdom of God.[6] This explanation of the typological significance of the days of creation comes within the context of a discussion of the last days, and while Hippolytus is wary to speculate about the consummation of the world, preferring instead to encourage his listeners to imitate the perseverance of the martyrs, he argues that careful attention to the mysteries indicated in the days of creation justifies engaging with questions regarding the last days.[7]

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[5] *Comm. Dan.* 4.10.2 (Schmidt, 139–40; GCSNF 7:216).

[6] Like many of his contemporaries, Hippolytus subscribed to what has been called a "cosmic week theory" or "cosmic-week typology." Like other early Christian writers, Hippolytus finds support for this reading of history in 2 Pet 3:8: "For a day of the Lord is as a thousand years" (as cited in *Comm. Dan.* 4.23.5 [Schmidt, 154; GCSNF 7:246]); cf. Ps 90:4 (LXX 89:4). From this perspective, the history of the world is understood to unfold over a period of six thousand years, with each millennium corresponding to a day, culminating in the Sabbath day, which "is a type (τύπος) and an image (εἰκὼν) of the coming kingdom of the saints, when [they shall] co-reign with Christ, when he arrives from heaven." *Comm. Dan.* 4.23.5 (Schmidt, 154; GCSNF 7:246). On Hippolytus's embrace of a creation-week typology, its roots in Jewish literature, and its expression in other early Christian sources, see David G. Dunbar, "The Eschatology of Hippolytus of Rome" (PhD diss., Drew University, 1979), 77–83; and Dunbar, "The Delay of the Parousia in Hippolytus," *VC* 37, no. 4 (1983): 316–19. The early Christian perspective is summarized by Irenaeus:

> For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded. And for this reason the Scripture says: "Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their adornment. And God brought to a conclusion upon the sixth day the works that He had made; and God rested upon the seventh day from all His works." (Gen 2:2) This is an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years (2 Pet 3:8); and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year. (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.28.3 [*ANF* 1:557; SC 153.358])

[7] For his warnings about speculation concerning the last days, see *Comm. Dan.* 4.15–22 (Schmidt, 145–52; GCSNF 7:228–44). After giving these warnings, Hippolytus goes on to explain, "But, so that in this we may not leave the matter at hand unexplained for the sake of the man who is inquisitive, we, being compelled to speak what is not possible, speak by force. For when the times from the foundation of

Hippolytus approaches the typological chronology of the world retrospectively. While he begins by stating, "for when the times from the foundation of the world and from Adam are reckoned, they furnish what is sought quite clearly to us,"[8] it is only on the basis of the advent of Christ that he can coordinate beginning and end:

> For the first advent (παρουσία) of our Lord in the flesh (ἔνσαρκος), when he was born (γεγέννηται) in Bethlehem, was [April/March] December 25th, Wednesday, while Augustus was reigning in his forty-second year, but in the five thousand and five hundredth year from Adam. He suffered in the thirty-third year, March 25th, Friday, the eighteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, while Rufus and Roubellion were Consuls [and Gaius Caesar, for the fourth time, and Gaius Cestius Saturninus].[9]

For Hippolytus, the advent of Christ, which comes 5,500 years after Adam, reveals the timeline and destiny of world history that was typologically foreshadowed in the days of Genesis 1. Corresponding to the sixth day, the day on which Adam was created, the advent of Christ marks the beginning of the fulfillment of God's chief work of creation.[10] For Hippolytus, in other words, the incarnation represents the beginning of the consummation of the world.[11]

For Hippolytus, the timeline of the world is profoundly political, which is evident in the correspondence that he draws between the days of creation and the

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the world and from Adam are reckoned, they furnish what is sought quite clearly to us." *Comm. Dan.* 4.23.1–2 (Schmidt, 153; GCSNF 7:244).While some scholars have seen in this an inconsistency with his preceding warnings, it seems rather that Hippolytus is not motivated by a desire to accommodate the speculations of human inquisitiveness but to safeguard a proper interpretation of the Scriptures for such minds. When he claims that "we, being compelled to speak what is not possible, speak by force," I understand this not to mean that he is being pressured to speculate but rather that he will proceed to speak of things not possible to know apart from the revelation given in the Scriptures and therefore under the constraint they exercise upon any proper interpretation of the last days.

[8] *Comm. Dan.* 4.23.2 (Schmidt, 153; GCSNF 7:244). See Hippolytus's calculations in the *Chronicon* §688–700, in *Hippolytus of Rome: Commentary on Daniel and 'Chronicon,'* ed. and trans. T. C. Schmidt, GSECP 67 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2017), 275–77.

[9] *Comm. Dan.* 4.23.3 (Schmidt, 153–54; GCSNF 7:244, 246).

[10] As Zani explains, for Hippolytus, the incarnation reveals Jesus as the human archetype according to which Adam was fashioned from the dust of the ground and through whom the original creation is coming to completion. Antonio Zani, *La Cristologia di Ippolito*, Ricerche di Scienze Teologische 22 (Brescia, Italy: Morcelliana, 1984), 213.

[11] On the delay of the parousia in Hippolytus's eschatology, see Dunbar, "Delay of Parousia in Hippolytus," 313–27.

sequence of earthly kingdoms that precipitate the heavenly kingdom of God in the eschatological Sabbath: "And so since in six days God made all things, it is necessary for six thousand years to be fulfilled. For they are not yet fulfilled, as John says, 'Five have fallen, but one is,' such is the sixth [millennium], 'the other has not yet come,' in saying 'the other' he describes the seventh [millennium] in which there shall be rest."[12] In explaining how the incarnation marks the midpoint of the sixth eschatological day, Hippolytus cites John's description of seven kings in Revelation 17:9–10, establishing a correspondence between the kingdoms of the world and the millennia typified in the days of Genesis 1.[13] This association underscores the inherently political nature of world history in Hippolytus's thought, emphasizing the significance of the succession of earthly kingdoms, which must ultimately yield to the universal heavenly kingdom of the saints as God's work of creation reaches its fulfillment.[14]

Having established this framework, Hippolytus anticipates an objection: "How will you demonstrate to me that the Savior was born in the five thousandth and five hundredth year?"[15] Rather than turning to a historical means of proof, Hippolytus returns to the image of the tabernacle with which he had prefaced his commentary: "Be easily

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[12] *Comm. Dan.* 4.23.6 (Schmidt, 154; GCSNF 7:246).

[13] Along with the seventy weeks of the prophecy of Dan 9:24–27, Dunbar argues that Hippolytus understands history to be patterned around the succession of world empires and the creation-week typology. Dunbar, "Eschatology of Hippolytus of Rome," 55–56. "Millennium" is interpolated by Schmidt in this passage, perhaps suggesting more than is necessary.

[14] On the relevance of the four kingdoms to Hippolytus's understanding of history, see Katharina Bracht, "The Four Kingdoms of Daniel in Hippolytus's Commentary on Daniel," in *Four Kingdom Motifs before and beyond the Book of Daniel*, ed. Andrew Perrin and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 187.

[15] *Comm. Dan.* 4.24.1 (Schmidt, 155; GCSNF 7:246). Christ's advent was also situated in the middle of the sixth millennium by Theophilus and Julius Africanus. See P. Siniscalco, "Chronography–Chronology," in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 1:518. Martin Werner has argued that the earliest Christians placed the advent of Christ at the end of the six thousand years and that the later displacement of the date to the middle of the millennium was due to concerns over the delay of the return of Christ. Martin Werner, *The Formation of Christian Dogma: An Historical Study of Its Problems*, trans. S. G. F. Brandon (New York: Harper & Bros., 1957), 38. I believe that the argument for Hippolytus's understanding of the incarnation in this chapter suggests a different theological reason for Hippolytus's timeline, namely that he understands the church as the extension of the incarnation.

instructed, O man! For the things which happened long ago in the desert under Moses concerning the tabernacle were accomplished as types and images of spiritual mysteries, so that in the end when the truth came in Christ you might be able to apprehend these things which have been fulfilled."[16] As in *Against Noetus*, here Hippolytus highlights Christ as the mystery of the economy, whose advent marks the inauguration of the last days. To explain how he knows that the birth of Christ occurred in the 5,500th year, he considers how the mystery of Christ was disclosed in the tabernacle built by Moses in the desert. In doing so, it becomes clear that Hippolytus does not distinguish the crucifixion from the incarnation but instead regards it as the pivotal moment of that divine act:

> For [God] says to [Moses], "And you shall make an ark of incorruptible (ἀσήπτων) wood and you shall gild it with pure gold inside and outside and you shall make its length two cubits and a half and its breadth a cubit and a half and its height a cubit and a half." The measure of which added together makes five and a half cubits, so that the five thousand five hundred years may be demonstrated, in which time the Savior comes from the Virgin, [and then] he offered the ark, his own body (τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα), into the world, gilded in pure gold, inside with the Word, outside with the Holy Spirit, so that the truth may be shown and the ark may be manifested.[17]

As this passage indicates, Hippolytus identifies the 5,500th year from Adam as the moment when the Word offers his body into the world. There are several indications that Hippolytus understands this moment as the crucifixion. First, he cites John 19:14, in which the Apostle identifies the hour of Christ's crucifixion as the sixth hour, to support his claim that the advent of Christ occurred at the midpoint of the sixth millennium.[18] Hippolytus's identification of a correspondence between the midpoint of the day of Passover on which Christ was crucified and the midpoint of the sixth millennium suggests that he understands the crucifixion of Christ as the moment when the Word

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[16] *Comm. Dan.* 4.24.2 (Schmidt, 155; GCSNF 7:246).

[17] *Comm. Dan.* 4.24.3 (Schmidt, 155; GCSNF 7:246, 248).

[18] *Comm. Dan.* 4.24.5 (Schmidt, 155–56; GCSNF 7:248). John 19:14 reads as follows: "Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. [Pilate] said to the Jews, 'Behold your King!'"

offered his body into the world.

Second, Hippolytus's identification of the crucifixion as the climactic moment of creation is further evidenced by his presentation of Christ's crucified and resurrected body as the image and temple of God, a connection that ties the crucifixion and resurrection to the Adamic and temple imagery that underpins his interpretation of world history. A prime example is Hippolytus's identification of the body of Christ as the image of God in the story of Nebuchadnezzar and the three young men. Identifying the statue erected by Nebuchadnezzar as a parody of the image of God, Hippolytus explains how the dimensions of the statue correspond to the crucified and resurrected body of Christ:

> For [Scripture] says, "*In the eighteenth year, Nebuchadnezzar the king made a golden image, its height was sixty cubits, and its breadth was six cubits, and he set it in the plain of Deira in the country of Babylon*." And so during eighteen years he imitated (ἐμιμήσατο) Jesus the son of God, who when he was present in the world raised his own image—a man—from the dead and showed this [image], which was pure and blameless as gold, to his disciples.
>
> By the height of sixty cubits, [one recalls] sixty patriarchs, through whom the image of God according to the flesh, that is the Word, is molded and fashioned and is exalted above all the patriarchs.
>
> Through the breadth of six cubits one recalls the six days (ἡξαήμερον)[of creation]. For on the sixth day man, having been molded from dust, came to be.[19]

Hippolytus's interpretation of the dimensions of the statue clarifies that the object of its parody, the image of God, is the crucified and resurrected body of Christ, whose revelation corresponds to the sixth day of creation.

Hippolytus's association of the crucifixion with the midpoint of the sixth day of creation is also borne out by his identification of the body of Christ with scriptural temple imagery.[20] In his treatise *On the Antichrist*, for example, Hippolytus explicitly

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[19] *Comm. Dan.* 2.27.6–8 (Schmidt, 83; GCSNF 7:108).

[20] In drawing on temple imagery in his *Commentary on Daniel*, Hippolytus reflects an emphasis found in the biblical book itself. A key theme that provides theological integration to the two halves of the book of Daniel is that of the temple. This is reflected in both the canonical placement of the book and its narrative content. In the Greek canonical order, the book follows Ezekiel, which ends with the vision of the new temple (Ezek 40–48), while in the Hebrew canonical order, it immediately precedes Ezra-Nehemiah, with its record of the rebuilding of the temple. The narrative span of the stories recorded in

identifies the crucified and resurrected body of Christ as the temple of God, explaining how the "Savior raised and displayed his holy flesh as a temple (ἀνέστησεν ὁ σωτὴρ καὶ ἀπέδειξε τὴν ἁγίαν σάρκα αὐτοῦ ὡς ναόν), and [the antichrist] will raise that temple of stone in Jerusalem."[21] Likewise, in his *Commentary on Daniel*, Hippolytus identifies Christ as the anointed Holy of Holies prophesied in Daniel 9:23–25, whose obedience on the cross reveals him to be the Son anointed by the Father in the Spirit.[22]

In various ways then, Hippolytus identifies the crucifixion as the pivotal moment of the eschatological sixth day of creation, representing God's creation of his human image. But how does Hippolytus perceive the cross as bringing about this creation, and how does this relate to his broader understanding of the world's destiny? In the following section, I will explain how Hippolytus understands the cross as the manifestation of God's creative power through its union of heaven and earth in the body of Christ, a union that constitutes both the goal and fulfillment of creation.

The Cross as the Goal and Fulfillment of Creation

In his preface to *On the Antichrist*, Hippolytus alludes to Paul's statement in

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Daniel are bookended by the desecration of the Jewish temple by Nebuchadnezzar and the granting of permission to restore the temple during the first year of Cyrus's reign. Thus, as Goswell explains, "The book of Daniel is a statement about the crisis years of exile, the period wherein the temple lies desolated and destroyed." Greg Goswell, "The Temple Theme in the Book of Daniel," *JETS* 55, no. 3 (2012): 514. If, as most scholars believe, the book of Daniel was composed soon after the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, this would also help to explain the focus of the book. Such a situation presented a crisis for the Jewish people. In particular, it called into question the sovereignty of God. As Goswell explains, "Foreign interference with the temple (= God's palace [היכל]) placed a question mark over God's sovereignty. These years called in question God's kingship, for God's temple, the definitive symbol of his kingship, is desecrated by Nebuchadnezzar (and later destroyed)." Goswell, "Temple Theme in Daniel," 514. The book of Daniel answers this question through an exploration of the clash between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world, turning on the vision of the heavenly throne in Dan 7, demonstrating thereby that God remains sovereign over the nations even as the visible, earthly symbol of his rule lies desolate. The people of God are called to remain prayerfully patient as they wait for the coming vindication of the kingdom of God. Picking up on these themes from the book of Daniel and following earlier Christian precedent, Hippolytus identifies the body of Christ as the temple of God and, therefore, the sign of his universal sovereignty.

[21] *Antichr.* 6 (GCS 1.2.8). Translation my own.

[22] *Comm. Dan.* 4.30.3–32.5 (Schmidt, 162–65; GCSNF 7:264–70).

Ephesians cited above and 1 Corinthians 15, explaining that the reason the Word was revealed as "child of God" (ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ παῖς) was so that all can become children of God (υἱοὺς θεοῦ) and be called unto one perfect human being (ἕνα τέλειον ἄνθρωπον): "For there is one child of God (ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ παῖς), through whom we too, receiving the regeneration of the Holy Spirit (ἁγίου πνεύματος ἀναγέννησιν), all desire to come into the one perfect and heavenly human being (ἕνα τέλειον καὶ ἐπουράνιον ἄνθρωπον)."[23]

In the passage that follows, Hippolytus explains how the cross serves as the instrument through which God has created the one perfect and heavenly human being—Christ—into whom all of humanity is called to become children of God. Employing the imagery of a textile loom, he weaves together a series of correspondences to illuminate the creative power of the cross:

> For the Word of God, being fleshless, put on the holy flesh from the holy virgin, as a bridegroom a garment, having woven it for himself in the sufferings of the Cross, so that having mixed our mortal body with his own power, and having mingled the corruptible into the incorruptible, and the weak with the strong, he might save perishing man.
> The web-beam, therefore, is the Passion of the Lord upon the Cross,
> and the warp on it is the power of the Holy Spirit,
> and the woof is the holy flesh woven by the Spirit,
> and the thread is the grace which by the love of Christ binds and unites the two in one,
> and the rods are the Word;
> and the workers are the patriarchs and prophets who weave the fair, long, perfect tunic for Christ;
> and the Word passing through these, like the combs (or rods), completes through them that which his Father wills.[24]

While the terminology of "the incarnation," in contemporary thought, is typically limited to the human birth of Christ from the Virgin Mary, Hippolytus's application of the imagery of a textile-loom identifies the cross as the pivotal moment of

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[23] *Antichr.* 3 (GCS 1.2.6). Translation my own.

[24] *Antichr.* 4 (GCS 1.2.6–7); translation from John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 1, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 158–59.

the incarnation.[25] For Hippolytus, the cross has facilitated the goal of the incarnation, namely the unity of all human beings in Christ, by serving as the instrument through which the union of heaven and earth has been accomplished. Through his passion on the cross, the Word has united the mortal body of fallen humanity to his divine power, so that what is corruptible has been taken up into the incorruptibility of the Word and what is weak has been taken up into the power of the Word. The result of this union is holy flesh, a spiritual body that shares in the incorruptible life of the Word by the power of the Spirit. For Hippolytus, it is this union of Spirit and flesh that constitutes the completion of God's creation of a human being in his image and likeness and the basis for humanity's union in Christ. Through the regeneration by the same Spirit, human beings are brought into the one perfect and heavenly human being, Jesus Christ, sharing in his incorruptible life in the flesh by the power of the Spirit.

As the union of Spirit and flesh, Jesus's crucified and resurrected body constitutes the realization of the goal of creation—the union of heaven and earth. Hippolytus can thus speak of the body of Christ as the Sabbath kingdom to which all of history is ordered. In the *Commentary on Daniel*, for example, he explains that the heavenly kingdom of the saints will be revealed not in earthly types and images but as "incarnate God and man" (ἔνσαρκος δὲ θεὸς καὶ ἄνθρωπος).[26] Hippolytus speaks elsewhere of Christ's incorruptible flesh as the holy land of the heavenly kingdom from which the life of the age to come springs and of the body of Christ as the New Jerusalem.[27]

For Hippolytus, Christ is uniquely qualified to achieve this union on the cross

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[25] On the contemporary use of incarnational terminology, see M. C. Steenberg, *Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 3. Two centuries later, Proclus of Constantinople applied the image of a textile-loom to Mary in the context of the controversy surrounding the Theotokos before the Council of Ephesus (431). See Nicholas P. Constas, "Weaving the Body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos, and the Loom of the Flesh," *JECS* 3, no. 2 (1995): 169–94.

[26] *Comm. Dan.* 4.10.2 (Schmidt, 140; GCSNF 7:216).

[27] *Ben. Mos.* (PO 27.197–99); *In Cant.* 24.4 (Smith, 531).

because of his generation from the Father according to the Spirit and his generation from the Virgin according to the flesh. It is the dual generation of the Son that forms the foundation of his unique ability to achieve the union of heaven and earth in his one body through his obedience on the cross. This is especially evident earlier in the *Commentary on Daniel*, where Hippolytus draws on the apostle Paul's language in Colossians 1 to interpret the vision of the Son of Man from Daniel 7. He explains the vision as follows:

> And so the Father, having subjected all things to his own Son, the things in the heavens and the things of the earth and the things under the earth, through all of them he exhibited him as being firstborn (πρωτότοκον) in all things; firstborn from God so that he being second after the Father may be displayed as God's son; firstborn before angels, so that also he may be shown as Lord of angels; firstborn from a virgin, so that he may be shown as reforming first-formed Adam in himself (πρωτόπλαστον Ἀδὰμ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἀναπλάσσων δειχθῇ); firstborn also from the dead so that he himself may be the first fruits of our resurrection.[28]

Hippolytus is concerned in this passage with demonstrating how the Father's subjection of all things to Christ reveals his identity as God's Son. As in *Against Noetus*, the revelation of divine sovereignty is accomplished *through* the humanity of the Son rather than in spite of it. This is especially evident in the distinction that Hippolytus makes between the Son's relationship to the angels and his relationship to Adam. While a contrast is made between Christ and Adam—"first-formed" and "firstborn"—this distinction is different from that drawn between Christ and the angels. Whereas the Son is said to be firstborn from God before angels in order to demonstrate that he is Lord *of* angels, the birth of the Son as firstborn from the virgin reveals him not to be Lord *of* Adam but as the one in whom Adam is formed anew.[29] Implicit in this distinction is

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[28] *Comm. Dan.* 4.11.5 (Schmidt, 141; GCSNF 7:220).

[29] As Bardy argues, this reflects Irenaeus's doctrine of recapitulation. Gustave Bardy, introduction to *Hippolyte: Commentaire sur Daniel*, ed. and trans. Maurice Lefèvre, SC 14 (Paris: Cerf, 1947), 60. In his comments on the story of Daniel and the lion's den, Hippolytus interprets Daniel's deliverance from the lions as a testimony to Christ as the new Adam, through whom humanity's dominion over creation is secured: "Then accordingly when the angel appeared in the den, the wild beasts were tamed and the lions, wagging their tails at him, rejoiced in being subjected by a new Adam (νέῳ Ἀδὰμ)." *Comm. Dan.* 3.29.3 (Schmidt, 126; GCSNF 7:186). Perhaps echoing Paul's description of creation's longing for

Hippolytus's conviction, borne of his theological anthropology, that it is as a human being that the Word is revealed as Son of the Father and, therefore, Lord of creation. Through the death and resurrection of the Son, Adam is renewed in the image of his Creator, who reveals the universal sovereignty of God over heaven and earth through his union of the two in his own body.

Hippolytus's interpretation in *On the Antichrist* of the same Danielic passage also identifies the dual origin of the Son as the basis for his union of heaven and earth and therefore his revelation of the universal sovereignty of God. He explains how the vision shows that all authority has been given to the Son, who has been established as king and judge of things in heaven, of things on earth, and of things under the earth. For Hippolytus, the domains of the Son's reign correspond to the divine and human generations of the incarnate Word. He is revealed as Lord of the heavenly realm because he was begotten as the Word from the Father's heart before all things (ὅτι λόγος ἐκ καρδίας πατρὸς πρὸ πάντων γεγεννημένος). He is revealed as Lord of the earth because "he was begotten as a human being among human beings, recreating this Adam through himself" (ὅτι καὶ ἄνθρωπος ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐγεννήθη, ἀναπλάσσων δι'ἑαθτοῦ τὸν Ἀδάμ). He is revealed as Lord of things under the earth because he was "enrolled among the dead (ἐν νεκροῖς κατελογίσθη), proclaiming the gospel to the souls of the saints and through death overcoming death."[30]

Hippolytus iterates the same point in his commentary *On the Blessings of Isaac and Jacob*, a work in which Jesus's identity as Son of God and Son of Man is integral to his inheritance of the fullness of earthly and heavenly blessings, understood in terms of

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the revelation of the sons of God (Rom 8:19), Hippolytus adds an interpolation to the story, explaining that as the lions "licked the holy feet of Daniel, they rolled around to taste the soles of his feet and they longed to be submitted to him." *Comm. Dan.* 3.29.3 (Schmidt, 126; GCSNF 7:186).

[30] *Antichr.* 26 (GCS 1.2.18–19). Translation my own.

the Father's subjection of all things to the Son.[31] For Hippolytus, the spiritual mysteries hidden in the blessings of the patriarchs reveal Jesus not only as the heir of earthly blessings by right of his generation from the lineage of promise but as the heir of heavenly blessings by right of his generation from the Father.[32] The figure of Joseph is especially important in this regard, given how he was prophesied by Jacob to receive both earthly and heavenly blessings.[33] Citing 1 Corinthians 15:27 (and perhaps Eph 1:22), Hippolytus demonstrates how this prophecy was fulfilled through the Father's subjection of all things to Christ, so that through his incarnation there has been revealed one Lord over both angels and human beings.[34] In his revelation as Son, the one Word of God, "begotten of two substances, of God and of the virgin (ἐκ δύο οὐσιῶν γεγεννῆσυαι, ἐκ θεοῦ καὶ ἐκ παρθένου)," has been glorified and exalted over all principalities (ἀρχάς), prophets, and apostles through his inheritance from God of all the divine blessings on his own head.[35]

In the same commentary, Hippolytus draws special connection to the obedience of Christ to identify the cross as the pivotal moment in the union of heavenly and earthly blessings in Christ. Throughout the commentary, Hippolytus contrasts the true Sonship of the Word with the sonship of the "first people" on the basis of Christ's

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[31] See, for example, *Ben. Is. Jac.* 7 (PO 27.24, 26, 28, 30); and *Ben. Is. Jac.* 8 (PO 27.30, 32, 34, 36).

[32] See, for example, *Ben. Is. Jac.* 2, (PO 27.10); *Ben. Is. Jac.* 15 (PO 27.72); *Ben. Is. Jac.* 16 (PO 27.76); and *Ben. Is. Jac.* 27 (PO 27.108, 110, 112). Hippolytus draws on a variety of images to identify the spiritual generation of the Son from the Father, the most important of which is the imagery of a lion and a lion's cub, which he also references in *Antichr.* 8 (GCS 1.2.9).

[33] Hippolytus explains that the scriptural reference to Joseph as the son of Jacob's old age (Gen 37:3) means that although the Son is manifested through his birth from the Virgin into a world that is already aging, he is revealed as always being with the Father before the ages. *Ben. Is. Jac.* 26 (PO 27.102, 104).

[34] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 26 (PO 27.106, 108).

[35] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 27 (PO 27.112).

perfect obedience to the Father.[36] This is especially evident in the contrast that Hippolytus draws between Jacob and Esau. Esau prefigured the rebellious violence of the Israelites when they asked for a king, boasting in "war and sword" rather than being justified by faith in God.[37] Jacob, on the other hand, prefigured Christ who through his obedience on the cross abolished the curse of the law placed on Adam, namely death, thereby opening up the way of life and peace to the faithful.[38] It is through his obedience on the cross that Jesus, as the mystery prefigured in Jacob, inherits all the blessings of the Father, so that all the fullness of deity is found to dwell bodily in him (ἵνα γὰρ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ κατοικοῦν εὑρεθῇ).[39]

For Hippolytus, the union of heaven and earth in the one body of Christ is the basis for the unity that the nations find in him. In his commentary *On the Song of Songs*, Hippolytus demonstrates how the unity of the nations is effected through the preaching of the gospel, which binds together the nations with the same love with which the Word bound his flesh to himself. Hippolytus draws on customary kingly imagery of a charioteer to describe this mystery of unity. The image, drawn from Song of Songs 1:9 ("I have likened you dear to my steed among the chariots of Pharaoh"), reveals the "grace of the new economy" in which Jew and Gentile are brought together in the experience of salvation. Interpreting this as a call to the Jewish synagogues to accept and proclaim the gospel of Christ, Hippolytus compares their potential honor to that of the apostles, who were sent out into the world like steeds, leading the chariot of the congregation of the Gentiles carrying the Word up to heaven.

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[36] See, for example, *Ben. Is. Jac.* 2 (PO 27.10). Within the blessings of Isaac and Jacob Hippolytus distinguishes between true blessings and mere prophecies. He explains that both are contained in what is said but that the blessings apply to the Son of God while the prophecies, which carry curses, apply to those who opposed the Son and regarded him as nothing. *Ben. Is. Jac.* 12 (PO 27.50, 52).

[37] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 3 (PO 27.12, 14).

[38] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 5 (PO 27.18, 20).

[39] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 9 (PO 27.38); cf. Col 2:9.

As with other images throughout his writings, Hippolytus explicates the various facets of the steeds and chariot in detail. Referencing the prophecy of Habakkuk 3:15, declaring "you sent out your prophets and stirred up many waters," Hippolytus explains that the stirring of many waters represented the stirring of many nations which have been tamed through the preaching of the gospel. Hippolytus specifically describes how in peace the gospel was proclaimed, the apostles bringing unity to the nations without resorting to violence or war. Bound together instead by a rope of love and yoke of faith, they announced the gospel. This gospel, proclaimed by the apostles, is the preaching of the four evangelists, as prefigured in the four wheels of the chariot. Furthermore, these wheels had wheels within them, thus demonstrating how the gospel was declared in the law.[40] Furthermore, the wheels of the chariot contained the sign of the Spirit as announced by Ezekiel, for "there was in the gospel indeed the very Spirit full of many eyes calling a variety of peoples through the commandments."[41] In demonstrating how the unity of the nations is achieved through the preaching of the gospel, Hippolytus identifies the cosmic union of heaven and earth as the basis for the social unity realized in the church in the present age.

Having surveyed several passages related to Hippolytus's theology of the cross as it relates to God's work of creation, his reason for identifying the cross as the definitive revelation of God's power can be summarized. I do so briefly in the section below, and provide several additional examples where Hippolytus identifies the cross as the paradigm of divine power, before turning my attention to his understanding of the church in relation to the cross.

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[40] Or as the Paleo-Slavonic text reads, the "New Testament is alive in the Old and preached through the same." *In Cant.* 8.6 (Smith, 481–82; Paleo-Slavonic text).

[41] *In Cant.* 8.7 (Smith, 483).

The Cross as the Revelation of Divine Power

On the basis of the passages examined in the previous two subsections, Hippolytus's understanding of the cross as the definitive revelation of divine power is shown to depend on his identification of the cross as the climactic moment of God's creation of his human image, whose union of divinity and humanity in his own body represents not only the goal but the fulfillment of creation, namely the unification of heaven and earth under the single sovereign rule of the Father through his Son. The cross in this way is understood as a revelation of the power of God to complete his work of creation. This summary of Hippolytus's understanding of the power of the cross is substantiated by several passages from the *Commentary on Daniel* and the commentary *On the Blessings of Isaac and Jacob*. I will consider the passage from the *Commentary on Daniel* first.

In commenting on the miracle that occurred during the reign of Hezekiah, in which the ordinary course of the sun was reversed, Hippolytus responds to the objection that such an event is impossible by appealing to God's relationship to creation as its Creator. As the one who designed creation himself, including the heavenly bodies, all things are subject to him and tremble at the sound of his voice. Therefore, what is impossible for human beings is possible for God.[42] As an additional witness, Hippolytus references the story of Joshua's war against the Amorites, in which the sun stood still until Israel's victory was complete, serving as further evidence that having established the ordinary courses of the heavenly bodies by his own authority, God is able to adjust them at will.[43]

But, for Hippolytus, the crucifixion of Christ overshadows both of these events

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[42] *Comm. Dan.* 1.8.1 (Schmidt, 33; GCSNF 7:16, 18); cf. Matt 19:26; Mark 10:27; and Luke 18:27.

[43] *Comm. Dan.* 1.8.2–5 (Schmidt, 33–34; GCSNF 7:18, 20).

as a demonstration of God's power as Creator. In this case, not only were the heavenly bodies shaken but "also the day itself and the entire world were shaken," indicating the magnitude of divine power revealed therein.[44] As I noted from Hippolytus's peroration in *Noet.* 18.8, Hippolytus understands these visible signs as creation's response to the vision of its Creator on the cross, the darkening of the world representing its inability to take in the superabounding glory of the gift of the Spirit poured out by the Word in his death.[45]

Hippolytus also captures the irony of the cross as a revelation of divine authority and power in his comments on the blessings given by Jacob to Judah and Issachar. Jacob's prophecy that Judah's hands would be on the back of his enemies indicates the manner in which Jesus would triumph over the authorities (τὰς ἐξουσίας), by stretching out his hands on the cross, being established through his death as lord (κύριος), master (δεσπότης), and judge (κριτὴς) of all by the Father.[46] The same is true of Jacob's blessing of Issachar, in which he declared that "Issachar desired the good and took his rest among the allotments; and seeing the resting place, that it was good, and the earth, that it was rich, he lowered his shoulder to toil and became a man tilling the ground" (Gen 49:15).[47] For Hippolytus, it is Christ alone who desired the good from his childhood. Taking his rest among the prophets as the fulfillment of what they had spoken and foreseeing the rest of the saints, he lowered his shoulder under the cross and through his suffering became a man plowing the beautiful field of the church, demonstrating that in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, the government (ἀρχή) had been placed upon his shoulder.[48]

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[44] *Comm. Dan.* 1.8.5 (Schmidt, 34; GCSNF 7:18, 20).

[45] See discussion of *Noet.* 18.8 in chap. 3 of this dissertation.

[46] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 16 (PO 27.74, 76).

[47] As cited in *Ben. Is. Jac.* 21 (PO 27.86, 88).

[48] *Ben. Is. Jac.* (PO 27.88).

Synthesizing these passages from Hippolytus demonstrates how he understands Christ to be the revelation of God as Creator through his revelation as the new Adam, the image of God, ploughing the field of a new humanity through his obedience on the cross. It is as the crucified one that he receives all authority from the Father, thereby revealing, as the image of God, the universal sovereignty of the Creator. This final passage from the commentary on the blessings of Jacob also indicates the centrality of the church to Hippolytus's understanding of what is accomplished in the incarnation, with the reference to the church as a plowed field being an especially important ecclesiological image. With this in mind, I turn my attention to Hippolytus's understanding of the church in relation to divine power.

The Church as Image of Divine Power

For Hippolytus, the church is defined by its participation in the cross. In the remainder of this chapter, I will trace the scriptural imagery that Hippolytus uses to convey this point. As I do so, it is important to be mindful, as Smith explains, that Hippolytus's community experienced the incarnation "not only as an idea, but also through embodied rituals and liturgies that made it an effective touch-point for daily living."[49] Thus, to consider what Hippolytus might mean by defining the church by participation in truth, one must not think of this as primarily an intellectual experience but one that is facilitated through concrete, embodied practices. Of these embodied rituals and liturgies, baptism was of utmost significance, as will become evident in my examination of key passages from the *Commentary on Daniel* and *On the Song of Songs*.

With the participatory nature of the church's relationship to the incarnation in mind, I will explore the way in which Hippolytus understands the cross as the paradigm

[49] Yancy Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing: Hippolytus's Commentary on the Song of Songs in Social and Critical Contexts*, GSECP 62 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2015), 172.

of the church's existence in three sections. In the first section, I demonstrate how Hippolytus, through application of Edenic imagery in his *Commentary on Daniel*, understands the church by way of participation in the cross of Christ. Through baptism into Christ's sufferings, believers are united to the Spirit, sharing in Christ's incorruptible flesh as they grow into his heavenly image. In the second section, I turn to Hippolytus's reflections on the anointing of the Word in his commentary *On the Song of Songs*, demonstrating how the church recapitulates within itself the descent and ascent of the Word through its participation in the Spirit poured out from the cross, realizing the goal of the incarnation through the church's participation in the divine flesh of Christ. Finally, in my exploration of Hippolytus's use of sartorial imagery from the Scriptures, I demonstrate how he understands the church as the extension of the incarnation and the visible revelation through which the power of the cross continues to be made known.

The Church's Participation in the Holy Flesh of Christ

Perhaps the most important passage for gaining insight into Hippolytus's ecclesiology is the first book of his *Commentary on Daniel*. His figural interpretation of the garden of Jehoiakim in the story of Susannah provides him with an opportunity to reflect on the church as the eschatological fulfillment of the garden of Eden through its participation in Christ. Of special importance to Hippolytus are the mysteries signified in the church's practice of baptism and anointing and the persecution faced by his community, which itself serves as a sign of its participation in Christ.

He begins by laying out the typological correspondences between the figures in the story and their mysteries:

> For these things which befell Susannah due to the elders are now likewise accomplished by the chiefs in Babylon. For Susannah foreshadows the church, Jehoiakim her husband foreshadows Christ. The garden is the calling of the saints just as fruit bearing trees are planted in the church. Babylon is the world. But the two elders represent the example of two peoples who scheme against the church, one who is of the circumcision and one who is of the gentiles. For the statement

> "*They were appointed as chiefs of the people and judges*," indicates that in this age they have authority and rule, unrighteously judging the righteous.[50]

For Hippolytus, there are two key descriptions regarding the elders that correspond in significant ways to the plight of the church. The first is the unity the elders find in their persecution of Susannah and the second is the timing of their attack. He explains that the manner in which the elders were said to fervently watch Susannah walking in the garden indicates the manner in which both Gentiles and Jews "carefully watch and interfere in the business of the church, both of whom wish to bring false testimonies against us, just as the apostles says, 'On account of the secretly introduced false brethren, who snuck in to spy out the liberty which we have in Christ Jesus.'"[51] Like the elders in the story of Susannah, the two people are enslaved by the "ruler of this age," unable to look to heaven with a pure heart or judge righteously in that they have become "plotters and seducers" (ἐπίβουλοι καὶ φθορεῖς) of the church. Ironically, though divided between one another in matters such as "terrestrial food" (βρώμασιν τοῖς ἐπιγείοις), the two peoples find unity in their persecution and oppression of the church.[52] It is violence against the church that brings the two disparate peoples together, a feature that plays prominently in Hippolytus's understanding of how Satan mimics the incarnation, which I will address in the next chapter.

The day on which the elders choose to satiate their lust is of crucial importance for Hippolytus as well. He quotes, "And it happened, while they watched for a fitting day" (Sus 15).[53] For Hippolytus, this can only mean a certain date. "What does Scripture

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[50] *Comm. Dan.* 1.15.4–6. Hippolytus uses the term *calling* (κλῆσις) in *On the Blessings of Isaac and Jacob* and *On the Blessings of Moses* to distinguish between the calling of the Jews under the law and the calling of the church that unites Jews and Gentiles in love. See *Ben. Is. Jac.* 11, 18 (PO 27.46, 48, 80); and *Ben. Mos.* (PO 27.174–75).

[51] *Comm. Dan.* 1.16.1 (Schmidt, 43; GCSNF 7:36), referencing Gal 2:4.

[52] *Comm. Dan.* 1.16.3–5 (Schmidt, 43–44; GCSNF 7:36, 38).

[53] *Comm. Dan.* 1.17.1 (Schmidt, 44; GCSNF 7:38).

say is fitting, but the day of the Passover in which the washing in the garden prepares those who burn and the church, like Susannah, who is washed, is offered as a pure bride for God?"[54] This is a particularly important identification for Hippolytus since the Passover marked the most important date of his community's liturgical calendar, being regarded as the anniversary of the creation of the world, marked by Christ's conception and his crucifixion. As T. C. Schmidt explains, the Passover's function as the focal point for the community's liturgical practices speaks to Hippolytus's understanding of the theological significance of these rites as a means of participation in the incarnation:

> The life of Jesus thus formed the focal points for the community's liturgical practices: on the Passover, the very day in which Christ, the Word (Logos), began and ended his life, so too did the community of saints undergo spiritual death, birth, and also marital union with Christ by baptism. Such a liturgical life emphasizes Hippolytus's distinctive Logos theology for it accentuates the synergetic ontology he describes as existing between the Word and humanity.[55]

Using the example of the wicked elders in the story of Susannah, Hippolytus explains how their abuse of the chaste woman is fulfilled in the persecution of Christians on the day of the Passover:

> For when the two peoples agree to destroy the lives of saints, they observe a fitting day and after rushing into the house of God, while all the people pray and hymn to God there, they, laying hold of them, drag some into court and arrest them saying, "Come, consent to us and sacrifice to our gods, but if not we will testify against you." As some of them are not willing, they, leading them to the deputies, charge them as practicing what is contrary to the decree of Caesar and they condemn them to death.[56]

For Hippolytus, the persecution faced by the church in the context of its paschal celebration is no coincidence but is itself part of the unfolding of the experience of the church anticipated in the Scriptures. It is within the context of this perspective on the persecution faced by his community, that one can ascertain what Hippolytus means by his

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[54] *Comm. Dan.* 1.17.2 (Schmidt, 44–45; GCSNF 7:38, 40).

[55] Schmidt, introduction, 22.

[56] *Comm. Dan.* 1.21.3 (Schmidt, 50; GCSNF 7:48, 50).

reference to "those who burn" (*Comm. Dan.* 1.17.2),[57] a conclusion supported by Hippolytus's later interpretation of Daniel 12:9–10, which speaks of the prophecy being "sealed until the end of time until many are chosen and are made white and are tried with fire."[58] Hippolytus interprets those who are chosen, white, and tried by fire as the martyrs worthy of inheriting the kingdom of heaven because of their belief in the Word of truth, having been baptized and passed through tribulation. "And who are they who are tried with fire except they who pass through fire and water through the spiritual washing of rebirth and do the will of God through many fiery trials and afflictions?"[59] Here the same elements of water and fire are brought together as it is in the reference to the washing in the garden. In both cases the waters of baptism and the fiery trial of persecution are understood as the purification of the church as a bride for Christ, just as the wicked elders are used by God to prepare and reveal Susannah as a pure and chaste bride. For Hippolytus then, baptism marks the beginning of the church's purification in the refining fires of persecution.

It is not only water and fire that play an important role in the imagery of Hippolytus's interpretation, however, but also the oil and ointments of anointing. Appealing to the figures of Susannah's two handmaidens, who are said to accompany her in the garden, Hippolytus explains that in her longing to receive the spiritual washing (πνευματικὸν λουτρὸν), the church is followed by two handmaidens, faith and love, who prepare the oil of the Holy Spirit's power and the ointments of the commandments of the Word, in which after washing "believers are anointed as with myrrh."[60] The life into

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[57] Schmidt suggests two options: either Hippolytus is referring to a refining fire or hellfire, if he even made a distinction between the two at all. See *Comm. Dan.* (Schmidt, 45n81).

[58] As cited in *Comm. Dan.* 4.58.2 (Schmidt, 192–93; GCSNF 7:330).

[59] *Comm. Dan.* 4.58.5 (Schmidt, 193; GCSNF 7:332).

[60] *Comm. Dan.* 1.17.3–5 (Schmidt, 45; GCSNF 7:40). The reference here is to the post-baptismal practice of anointing with myrrh-infused oil, which is the focal point for much of the theological reflection of Hippolytus's commentary *On the Song of Songs*. See Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing,* xiii.

which the church is baptized is, for Hippolytus, life in the Spirit in obedience to the Word of God. Through its baptism into the fires of persecution, the church receives the Spirit by which it shares in the incorruptible life of the Word.[61] This participation in incorruptibility becomes a prominent theme in the remainder of Hippolytus's interpretation, in which he turns his attention to the garden setting of the story.

For Hippolytus, the central element of the story is the garden setting, which harkens back to Eden, the garden planted by God in the early chapters of Genesis, and which was "intended to become a model and image of the church."[62] The church is the heavenly spiritual antitype of the first garden, a point that Hippolytus makes by appeal to God's instructions to Moses concerning the tabernacle (cf. Exod 25:40; Heb 8:5), addressed earlier in chapter 1.[63] His invocation of the image of the tabernacle serves not only to explain the typological relationship between the garden and the church but highlights the church's distinguishing characteristic: its holiness.

For Hippolytus, the holiness of the church is received through participation in the incorruptible flesh of the Word. He demonstrates this reality by appealing to the location in which the garden was planted, drawing out an interplay between the soil of the garden and the flesh of the new Adam. The holiness of the church is evident in the arboreal abundance of the garden, which bears witness to the fecundity of the soil in which it is planted. This life distinguishes the church from a "mere place" (ψιλὸς τόπος), a

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[61] As Zani explains, the teaching of the truth according to the commandments of the Word is not a secondary benefit of the incarnation but central to its goal: "The precepts of the two Testaments guide men not only to the knowledge of the true Savior, but also to the assimilation of salvation itself, as they keep whoever complies with them in a spirit of faith bound to God. . . . Welcoming the truth means being reintegrated into God through grafting into Christ, the κῆρυξ ἀληυείας." Zani, *La Cristologia di Ippolito*, 468.

[62] *Comm. Dan.* 1.18.1 (Schmidt, 46; GCSNF 7:40).

[63] The identification of the church with Paradise was an important element of Irenaeus's theology. See Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967); and Christopher A. Graham, *The Church as Paradise and the Way Therein: Early Christian Appropriation of Genesis 3:22–24*, Bible in Ancient Christianity 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 109–35.

phrase that not only serves as a description of bare soil but also echoes Hippolytus's reference to Theodotus's reduction of Christ to a mere human being (ἄνθρωπον φιλὸν). This interplay is extended in Hippolytus's elaboration of his statement: "For neither is a mere place able to be called a church, nor a house which is built with stone and clay (λίθου καὶ πηλοῦ), nor a man himself able to call himself a church. For a house is destroyed and a man dies."[64] Hippolytus is conveying more than the mundane observation that the church cannot be reduced to an earthly locale. He is distinguishing between mere humanity, marked by its corruptibility and mortality, with the incorruptibility of the church as a heavenly spiritual reality.

For Hippolytus, the essential difference is the material from which the church is formed. Whereas stone and clay, the dust from which Adam was fashioned, return to the ground, the building material of the church is prefigured by the incorruptible wood (ἐξ ξύλων ἀσήπτων) from which Moses fashioned the tabernacle.[65] In identifying the holy ground in which the church has been planted, Hippolytus weaves together the imagery of garden and temple in describing the church as a "spiritual house of God, which was planted in Christ as it was in the east" (οἶκος θεοῦ πνευματικὸς ἐπὶ τῷ Χριστῷ ὡς ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ πεφυτευμένος).[66]

For Hippolytus, Christ's death on the cross has enabled him to offer up holy ground from which humanity can be formed anew. Not only is this signaled by Hippolytus's reference to the cross under the image of incorruptible wood but by the way in which he connects the imagery of planting in the ground to burial in Christ's crucified

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[64] *Comm. Dan.* 1.18.5 (Schmidt, 46; GCSNF 7:42).

[65] While the word for dust in the LXX version of Gen 2:7 is χοῦν, πηλός was used by Greek authors, including several patristic writers, in reference to the mud from which the human being was created. LSJ, s.v. "πηλός."

[66] *Comm. Dan.* 1.18.7 (Schmidt, 46; GCSNF 7:42). On the flesh of Christ as the holy land of a new garden of Eden, see also *Ben. Mos.* 27.197–99.

body.[67] Notably, in the Gospel of Mark, τόπος is not used generically but with special reference to the tomb in which Christ was buried.[68] And in subsequent Christian tradition, the phrase "holy place" is used frequently to refer to the grave of a martyr or a monastery associated with it.[69] For Hippolytus, the church is constituted by its burial, through baptism, in the holy flesh of its crucified and risen Lord. Coming to Christ in faith, its members are united to the body of Christ by the love of the Word, receiving the anointing of the Spirit, by which they share in the life of the Son through participation in his death.[70]

This understanding of the dynamic power of the cross at work in the church is reinforced by what Hippolytus subsequently says about those who do not persist in faith: "Likewise again he who has believed and has not kept the commandments is deprived of the Holy Spirit and has become an outcast of the Church. He no longer receives [the Holy Spirit] but since he has become earth [again], he is bound to return to his old self."[71] The failure to persist in faith results in the deprivation of the Spirit, which Hippolytus describes as a return to the corruptible dust from which the first Adam was formed. What is demonstrated in Hippolytus's application of this imagery is his underlying conviction that God's creation of humanity, accomplished on the cross, is extended in the life of the church. The original inspiration of Adam in the garden is revealed as a type of the anointing in the Spirit that would be poured out on humanity through the union of God

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[67] Jesus himself, of course, makes the same connection in the Gospel of John: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24).

[68] As the young man sitting on the side of the tomb explains, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place (τόπος) where they laid him" (Mark 16:6).

[69] LSJ, s.v. "τόπος."

[70] Dietrich Ritschl, "Hippolytus's Conception of Deification: Remarks on the Interpretation of Refutation X, 34," *SJT* 12, no. 4 (1959): 388–89.

[71] *Comm. Dan.* 1.18.13 (Schmidt, 48; GCS NF 7:44).

and man accomplished through the obedience of Christ on the cross.

It is in this sense that Hippolytus's succinct definition of the church, given in the context of this discussion, is to be understood. "What therefore is a church? A community of saints participating in truth (τί οὖν ἐστιν ἐκκλησία; σύστημα ἁγίων ἐν ἀληθείᾳ πολιτευομένων)."[72] The truth, which Hippolytus identifies as the object of the saints' participation, is none other than Christ, as he elsewhere explains.[73] Not only does he identify Christ as truth, but his definition of the church serves to highlight the heavenly, spiritual nature of the church, given how within Hippolytus's vocabulary *truth* is used to distinguish spiritual mysteries from corresponding types and images.[74]

Importantly, however, Hippolytus's use of *politeuomenon* clarifies that the church does not exist as a purely spiritual reality but as an embodied community.[75] The body of Christ is a *politeia* in which the saints dwell as citizens of the kingdom of God. The union of spirit and flesh achieved in the incarnation is extended in the basic composition of the church as a heavenly spiritual mystery embodied in the flesh of the saints who together are constituted in and as the one body of the Son. For Hippolytus, the importance of the nature of the church as a polity resides especially in how the saints are encompassed in the mode of participation in Christ, ministering Christ to one another, such that the ministry of Christ and the ministry in and through his saints is indivisible:

> Therefore unanimity (ὁμόνοια) and the way of the saints on a single path, this is a church, a spiritual house of God, which was planted in Christ as it was in the east, in which diverse and blossoming trees appear to those who enter, in which there is the generation of the fathers, distinguished from the beginning, and the works of the

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[72] *Comm. Dan.* 1.18.6 (Schmidt, 46; GCSNF 7:42).

[73] Cf. *Comm. Dan.* 4.12.1; 41.1 (Schmidt, 142, 174; GCSNF 7:220, 288).

[74] See, for example, *Ben. Is. Jac.* 7 (PO 27.30).

[75] On the Greek notion of *politeia*, see Verity Harte and Melissa Lane, eds., *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). While Murphy argues that Hippolytus uses the term more generically to describe the Christian way of life, he also argues that this way of life carried profound political implications. Francis Xavier Murphy, *Politics and the Early Christian* (New York: Desclée, 1967), 106.

> prophets, which were fulfilled after the law, the chorus of the apostles who became wise through the Word, of all the martyrs, who will be saved through the blood of Christ, and the calling of the virgins, who are sanctified through water, the chorus of teachers and the order of bishops, and of priests and Levites, [these are a church]![76]

Participation in Christ constitutes the church as a universal community, extending backward and forward in time to unite the people of God into one body. The unity the church shares as the body of Christ does not negate its diversity. Rather, the fullness of its unity is premised on the various ways in which this diverse community ministers to one another the life they share in Christ. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, virgins, priests, etc., are all planted together in the one holy ground of the flesh of Christ so that they might bear a diversity of life-giving fruit, becoming for one another the expression of Christ's sustenance for them. Hippolytus teaches, "And having been adorned in every manner and way, all these things flourish in a church, being unable to be destroyed. We ourselves, while partaking of their fruit, rejoice, since we eat of the spiritual and heavenly food that comes forth from them."[77]

What Hippolytus particularly has in mind is the way the members of the church minister Christ to one another by how they bear witness to him according to the Scriptures:

> For the blessed patriarchs themselves ministered the oracles of God to us, just as blossoming trees which were planted in a garden also bear fruit among themselves at all times, in order that even now we might know the sweet Christ who is sent forth from them, who is the fruit of life who is given to us. In this Eden a river of everlasting water flows and four rivers, which stream into it, pour over all the land of men, as also is displayed in the Church. For Christ, who is a river, through the fourfold saving Gospel, watches carefully over all and is present in all. And he also irrigates and waters all who believe in him, as the prophet says, "Rivers shall gush from his heart."[78]

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[76] *Comm. Dan.* 1.18.7 (Schmidt, 46–47; GCSNF 7:42).

[77] *Comm. Dan.* 1.18.8 (Schmidt, 47; GCSNF 7:42). In his commentary on Song of Songs, Hippolytus interprets a reference to the woodwork and pillars of the beloved's house as the glory and incorruptibility of the fathers and the apostles. *In Cant.* 16.1 (Smith, 500).

[78] *Comm. Dan.* 1.18.9–10 (Schmidt, 47; GCSNF 7:42, 44); cf. Isa 35:6; and John 7:38.

For Hippolytus, it is through the proclamation of the gospel that the church receives into itself the power of the cross. It is the proclamation of the good news, according to what had been foretold by the prophets, through which Christ comes to inhabit all who believe in him. Eating from the tree of life, who is the Word, the saints are sustained in the life of Christ through the fruit borne in the witness of the saints to their crucified and risen Lord.[79] It is in this way that the church, through its unity, images the human-divine life of the Son in whom it participates. It is a spiritual, heavenly unity manifest in the communion of those who are being remade in the one image of God in Christ.

The Church's Participation in the Anointing of the Word

In his commentary *On the Song of Songs*, Hippolytus's reflections on the rite of post-baptismal anointing offers him an opportunity to further explore the church's participation in the cross through the imagery of the scriptural text. While the theme of anointing structures the work as a whole, there are three key passages in which Hippolytus provides extended reflections on the subject, demonstrating how he understands the life of the church to reflect the paradigm of the cross. From these examples a consistent picture emerges, in which believers recapitulate the life of Christ in themselves. Through the preaching of the gospel, received by faith in baptism, believers receive the Spirit, the anointing oil of the Word, into themselves as they are conceived as new human beings in the womb of the church. Nurtured through the proclamation of Christ according to the twofold witness of the Scriptures, believers are built up and perfected as a witness to Christ, participating in his sufferings so that they might join him in his heavenly ascent by sharing in his divine nature. I tease out the details of

[79] Hippolytus identifies the Word with the tree of life in *Comm. Dan.* 1.18.11 (Schmidt, 47; GCSNF 7:44).

Hippolytus's exposition of the scriptural imagery behind this summary in the passages below.

The Aroma of Anointing Oil

Hippolytus's commentary on the opening verses of Song of Songs provides the basic theological framework within which he understands the spiritual significance of baptismal anointing. One of the most important passages is *In Cant.* 2 where Hippolytus interprets the opening verses as a reference to this anointing. The passage as cited by Hippolytus runs thus: "Kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, because your breasts are lovelier than wine, and [the] aroma of your anointing oil, greater than all incense. Indeed your name is as aroma of anointing oil spread out."[80] Hippolytus explains that this passage represents a type of the people who invokes the heavenly Word for the gift of the Spirit, wishing to join the power of the Spirit to itself.[81] For Hippolytus, the power of the Spirit is given through the commandments of Christ in the law and the gospel, which awaken love in those who receive them. As elucidated in the subsequent reference to the breasts that are lovelier than wine, it is the commandments of Christ that make the heart glad and provide eternal nourishment to the faithful who suckle from the two commandments.[82] For those in Christ, the milk is the teaching of the church according to the two commandments. Hippolytus calls on his hearers to draw from these two breasts so that they might be a "witness who is built up and perfected."[83] Here believers are presented as little children receiving spiritual nourishment through the milk of the church's proclamation of Christ according to the twofold witness of the Scriptures, a

[80] *In Cant.* 2.1 (Smith, 442–43).

[81] *In Cant.* 2.2 (Smith, 443–44).

[82] *In Cant.* 2.3 (Smith, 444–46).

[83] *In Cant.* 2.3 (Smith, 446).

vision which aligns well with passages I have already considered in this chapter that present the church as the place in which human beings experience maturation in Christ.

In what follows, Hippolytus presents the experience of the church as a continuation of the incarnation. He identifies the anointing oil of Christ as the Word who, in going forth from the Father, diffuses his aroma and gladdens the hearts of "those who hear it."[84] "Those who hear it" are those who receive the preaching of the gospel in faith. Thus, Hippolytus celebrates the fragrance of the Word as "the wonderful mysteries preached by means of the Holy Spirit."[85] It is, thus, through the preaching of the gospel that the Father disperses the Spirit of the aroma, it being through the gift of the Spirit that the anointing oil of the Word sent from the Father's own heart fills the world with joy.[86]

As those who have received the Spirit of the Word sent from the "paternal mouth," the saints have "taken into their own spirits" something good in order that "all things might be filled in unity with the aroma."[87] For Hippolytus, this filling of the Spirit is an extension of the Word's own human-divine life from and in the Spirit. The same aroma of the Spirit that was "taken into the womb and created a new[ly] begotten human"[88] is the same Spirit that was sent down over the waters and purified them. Through the purification of the waters of baptism by the Spirit, believers are able to enter through baptism into the womb of the church, being created in Christ as a newly begotten human being. Through baptism, participation in the Word's living flesh has been opened up to those who in faith receive the twofold testimony of the law and the gospel in the Spirit, themselves becoming the fulfillment of the prophets and spreading through their

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[84] *In Cant.* 2.4 (Smith, 446).

[85] *In Cant.* 2.5 (Smith, 447).

[86] *In Cant.* 2.5 (Smith, 447–48).

[87] *In Cant.* 2.6 (Smith, 449).

[88] *In Cant.* 2.8 (Smith, 451).

good works the anointing oil, becoming themselves part of the dispersion of the aroma of anointing oil sent from heaven.[89]

Through participation in Christ, the saints share in the fullness of his divine life, a point he accentuates by distinguishing the dispersion of the Word from the idea of emanation.[90] The difference between the two is that whereas emanation implies the dilution of that which is emanated, what is spread out in the incarnation of the Word does not "diminish from the vessel itself" as it fills the ones who come near to it. "Such is the nature of this anointing oil. O beloved, it is the well-spring of the gospel and it constantly goes forth (or issues forth) and does not wane."[91] Rather than understanding the church to participate in a lesser emanation of divinity, the incarnation of the Word in the church means that the church receives into itself as the body of Christ the fullness of the Spirit of God. Thus, Hippolytus calls his listeners to receive the anointing oil so that they might put on Christ and become fellow heirs with him.[92]

The Aroma of Balsam

Hippolytus returns to this theme in his comments on *In Cant.* 1:14 where, according to the Georgian translation of Hippolytus's commentary, a "dear one" is described like "nard of Cyprus . . . in the vineyard of Engeddi."[93] Hippolytus begins by explaining that Engeddi refers to a place in Judea where vineyards were cultivated among

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[89] *In Cant.* 2.7, 33 (Smith, 450, 459).

[90] Smith suggests that Hippolytus likely has in mind the Valentinian notion of the origin of the Word. Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 452n102. The context of the passage, however, suggests that this has to do with the Word's descent in the preaching of the gospel and reception at baptism. On the connection between Valentinian baptism and the idea of emanation, see Einar Thomassen, "Baptism among the Valentinians," in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, ed. David Hellholm, Tor Vegge, Øyvind Norderval, and Christer Hellholm, BZNW 176 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 905–8.

[91] *In Cant.* 2.8 (Smith, 451).

[92] *In Cant.* 2.9 (Smith, 452). As discussed above, Hippolytus understands the inheritance of the Son to be the fullness of divinity. *Ben. Is. Jac.* 9 (PO 27.38).

[93] On the textual issues related to this passage, see Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 490, 240.

balsam trees. Hippolytus uses the imagery to reflect on Jesus's suffering on the wood of the cross like a grapevine growing on a tree whose crushed fruit emits the aroma of balsam oil.[94] He notes how that as long the fruit remains on the vine it cannot emit an aroma. It is only in being cut and crushed that it releases its aromatic liquid. For Hippolytus, likewise, it is through the cross, where the Word was pierced and crushed, that the aroma of the Spirit has been spread out over humanity.[95]

For Hippolytus, what is necessary to see in this is how the Word through the cross has fully shared in the human condition so they might share in what is his. He explains that when the Word dwelt in a body, though he appeared lowly he was indeed great, being "mighty in his sufferings on the wood."[96] Through this mixing of lowliness and greatness on the cross, the Word reveals the "new grace of the economy," namely that "the rich was made poor for us, that by his wealth we might be made rich."[97] Through his humble obedience on the cross, the Word spreads out the aroma of the anointing from the heart of the Father and makes known to the earth the good news.[98] But the ministry of the Word does not end there. Having been diffused from heaven, he ascends from earth to heaven. Through this, the Word reveals the destiny of those who have received the dew drawn from the fruit of Christ's body. The seal of life they have received in their anointing is this: "the Word descended that men might be able to ascend to heaven."[99] Thus the power of the Word is revealed on the cross in that through the

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[94] *In Cant.* 13.1 (Smith, 489–91).

[95] *In Cant.* 13.2 (Smith, 491–93).

[96] *In Cant.* 13.1, 3 (Smith, 490–91, 493).

[97] *In Cant.* 13.3 (Smith, 493–94); cf. 2 Cor 8:9.

[98] *In Cant.* 13. 3 (Smith, 494).

[99] *In Cant.* 13.4 (Smith, 494–95).

descent of Christ into their abasement earthly creatures have been enabled to ascend with him to heaven.

A Mixed Aroma

The theme of participation in the ascent of the Word is prominent in subsequent sections of the commentary as well. In section 26, for example, Hippolytus engages the question raised in Song of Songs 3:6: "Who is this who goes out from the desert, as billows of smoke ascending, sending up the aroma of incense, myrrh and frankincense, mixed with all aromas?"[100] Hippolytus explains that this refers to the church's gathering of the Gentiles, who for a long time had been a desert toward God but who now have been brought up from the desert in order to become fellow citizens with Christ.[101] The aromatic nature of the smoke is especially important, given what I have already noted about Hippolytus's interpretation of the aroma of the Word. In this case, the mixing of aromatics is also significant. The mixing of myrrh, signifying the passion and burial of Christ, with frankincense, signifying the glory of God, demonstrate the mystery of the cross as the manifestation of divine glory through the passion of Christ. But this frankincense is mixed, as Hippolytus notes, "with all the unguents mixed by the sellers of cosmetics and unguents," signifying the congregation of all into "one aroma for Christ."[102]

Hippolytus illustrates this reality by explaining that just as "a flame as a leader of chariots, shows [the smoke] to us and appears, so the good mystery of Christ was

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[100] As cited in *In Cant.* 26.1 (Smith, 546).

[101] Smith notes here that the Georgian word for citizen (*mokalake*) is from a word for "town" or "city" and can refer to a fellow citizen of a town or city. As such, it can refer to a fellow citizen or a friend. Smith, *The Mystery of Anointing*, 547n409. Given that the Greek paraphrase uses the Pauline language of "citizens" and "fellow heirs," it is more reliably understood as designating citizens. Cf. Rom 8:17; Eph 2:19; and Phil 3:20.

[102] *In Cant.* 26.3 (Smith, 549–50). According to the Greek paraphrase, it is the gospel that is the incense maker "for in the gospel lie all the sweet smelling mysteries" (Smith, 550; Greek paraphrase).

spread abroad giving notice, going up from earth to heaven."[103] Christ here is described as a flame carrying the nations up to heaven like a charioteer, "making known the resurrection as billows of incense smoke going up."[104] The Greek paraphrase is more explicit: "Because smoke goes up into the air as it comes from the fire, in the same way the mystery of Christ announces the economy to the ends of the earth, sending us up from the earth into heaven by the flame of divinity."[105] Furthermore, this ascent takes place upon the cross as the church by being buried in Christ shares in his myrrh and frankincense, offerings themselves as sweet smelling offerings:

> For he pointed to the cross as a pillar of wood, by which the church is guarded, and myrrh and frankincense the burial in which it is burned. For these things [are] the sweet smelling offerings of the church. But after these, he says, a cloud of the incense maker. For the sufferings gathered together from his conception to the resurrection all emit a sweet fragrance. He called the gospel incense maker, for in the gospel lie all the sweet smelling mysteries.[106]

Thus, through the church's participation in the cross, the Word, "found in the likeness of an aroma," is made manifest.[107] Once again, the pattern of descent for the sake of ascent is evident but understood in this case as a reference to the preaching of the gospel. Through the preaching of the gospel, the divine Word has come down from heaven so that what is of earth might be brought up. United to Christ through the preaching of the cross, and buried with him in the fire of persecution, the church is carried upward by the flame of divinity, recapitulating within itself the union of the heavenly and the earthly made possible through the cross. Thus, for Hippolytus, the church continues to reveal the power of the cross in the world, serving as the image of

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[103] The image of a chariot alludes to Hippolytus's comments in *In Cant.* 8, which I consider below.

[104] *In Cant.* 26.2 (Smith, 549).

[105] *In Cant.* 26.2 (Smith, 548).

[106] *In Cant.* 26.3 (Smith, 549–50; Greek paraphrase).

[107] *In Cant.* 26.3 (Smith, 549).

divine power. Having considered the imagery of anointing in the commentary *On the Song of Songs*, I now turn to a different category of images in explaining further how Hippolytus understands the incarnational life of the church.

The Church as the Body of Christ

In the previous two sections, I have demonstrated Hippolytus's understanding of the church's participation in the cross through his exposition of scriptural images like the garden of Eden, anointing oil, and aromatics. Through consideration of key passages, a picture of the church has emerged as a recapitulation of the cross as the climactic moment of the incarnation. In turning to Hippolytus's use of sartorial imagery in the Scriptures, I wish to amplify the connection Hippolytus makes between cross and church. In doing so, I believe it becomes evident that Hippolytus does not primarily think of the incarnation of the Word as an event from the past but as an ongoing reality through the Word's embodiment in the church, which further elevates Hippolytus's understanding of the church as an image of divine power.

Sartorial images, of course, feature prominently in early Christian thought and practice.[108] However, Hippolytus's application of such imagery is unusual in its application. Like other early Christian writers, he can speak of believers being clothed in Christ, but throughout his writings he applies such imagery predominantly to Christ himself. His application of this imagery serves primarily to illustrate the goal of the incarnation, namely the union of all humanity in and as the one body of Christ. This use of sartorial imagery is achieved by establishing a close relationship between the garments of Christ as his personal flesh and the garments of Christ as the believers he gathers

[108] See Janelle Peters, "Robes of Transfiguration and Salvation in Early Christian Texts," in *Dress and Religion in Mediterranean Antiquity*, ed. Alicia Batten and Kelly Olson (New York: T&T Clark, 2021), 279–87. On a biblical theology of dress, see Erik Peterson, "A Theology of Dress," *Communio* 20, no. 3 (1993): 558–68.

around him as his universal body.[109]

The Flesh of the Word from the Virgin

To explore Hippolytus's exposition of sartorial imagery in the Scriptures, it helps to return to the key passage from *Antichr.* 4, in which Hippolytus's explains how the cross serves as the basis for the reunification of humanity through the union of Spirit and flesh in the body of Christ. In my previous comments on the passage, I already noted how it reflects Hippolytus's identification of the cross as the climax of the incarnation, but there are additional details in the passage that suggest that his primary point of reference is not the past event of the cross but the ongoing manifestation of its power in the church. Taking special note of Hippolytus's reference to the patriarchs and the prophets, I cite the passage in full again:

> For the Word of God, being fleshless, put on the holy flesh from the holy virgin, as a bridegroom a garment, having woven it for himself in the sufferings of the Cross, so that having mixed our mortal body with his own power, and having mingled the corruptible into the incorruptible, and the weak with the strong, he might save perishing man.
> The web-beam, therefore, is the Passion of the Lord upon the Cross,
> and the warp on it is the power of the Holy Spirit,
> and the woof is the holy flesh woven by the Spirit,
> and the thread is the grace which by the love of Christ binds and unites the two in one,
> and the rods are the Word;
> and the workers are the patriarchs and prophets who weave the fair, long, perfect tunic for Christ;
> and the Word passing through these, like the combs (or rods), completes through them that which his Father wills.[110]

As Behr has noted, Hippolytus's explanation that the flesh of the Word received from the Virgin is woven by the patriarchs and prophets, who through their actions and words proclaimed the sufferings of the Word, means that it is "in the

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[109] As an example of the former, see *In Cant.* 12.1: "A container for oil (or chrism), a vessel, [is] Christ who put on the garment of flesh and is held fast by means of a binding of a chord of love, that by means of this he may be crushed as grapes" (Smith, 488). The focus of this section will be the latter.

[110] *Antichr.* 4 (GCS 1.2.6–7). Translation from Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 158–59.

preaching of Jesus Christ, the proclamation of the one who died on the Cross, interpreted and understood in the matrix, the womb, of Scripture, that the Word receives flesh from the virgin."[111] While such an interpretation seems odd, it aligns with Hippolytus's applications of scriptural imagery that I have already considered in this chapter. This interpretation of the passage is also substantiated by Hippolytus's subsequent identification in *On the Antichrist* of the Virgin with the church, in the context of his interpretation of the woman in Revelation 12.[112] In that passage, Hippolytus describes how the church, endowed with the Father's Word and marked by heavenly glory, endures the birth pangs of persecution, such that the church "will not cease to bear from her heart the Word that is persecuted by the unbelieving in the world."[113] He further describes the church as "always bringing forth Christ, the perfect man-child of God, who is declared to be God and man" and who becomes the "instructor of all nations."[114] For Hippolytus, the birth of Christ, in this case, has primary reference to his birth through the confession of the saints who bear witness to him in great trial and through whom Christ is known as incarnate God and man.[115] As Charles Robert Helms explains in his examination of this passage, "Hippolytus depicts Christ's coming as primarily an event of the present made possible by his self-sacrifice in the past."[116] This identification of the church—as the Virgin who gives birth to Christ through the confession of the martyrs and who is

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[111] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 159.

[112] This, of course, is the identification that Revelation makes. On the church as the woman in Rev 12 and its place within the larger structure of the book, see Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1993), 15–18. On Hippolytus's identification of the woman with the church, see Charles Robert Helms, "The Apocalypse in the Early Church: Christ, Eschaton, and Millennium" (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1991), 143–47.

[113] *Antichr.* 61 (*ANF* 5:217; GCS 1.2.41).

[114] *Antichr.* 61 (*ANF* 5:217; GCS 1.2.41–42).

[115] See Zani, *La Cristologia di Ippolito*, 379.

[116] Helms, "The Apocalypse in Early Church," 145.

described as providing the flesh with which the Word is clothed—suggests a closer connection between the flesh of Christ and the saints than might otherwise be recognized. This is further supported by additional passages in which Hippolytus employs sartorial imagery from Scripture.

Jacob's Garments

In his comments on Isaac's blessing for Jacob in Genesis 27, Hippolytus again identifies the church as the mother of Christ through his identification of Rebekah as a type of the church (εἰκόνα φέρουσα τῆς ἐκκλησίας) and Jacob as a type of Christ. Citing Rebekah's instructions for Jacob to bring her two young goats, Hippolytus explains how this has been fulfilled through the twofold calling of Jews and Gentiles through the preaching of the gospel. Rebekah's subsequent clothing of Jacob in the robe of Esau and the skins of the goats is understood by Hippolytus to reveal two realities. First, the clothing in Esau's robe signifies that the Word would take on flesh. Second, the covering of Jacob's arms—the natural smoothness of which Hippolytus understands to signify the sinlessness of the Lord's flesh—in the skins of the goats indicates how the Word took upon himself the sins of humanity when he stretched out his arms on the cross.[117]

As in the treatise *On the Antichrist*, the church is identified as the mother of the Word, the one from whom he receives his flesh. Like the woman in Revelation 12, the church is also depicted as sharing in the tribulations of her Son. When Rebekah invokes Jacob's curse upon herself (Gen 27:12–13), Hippolytus interprets this as fulfilled in the church which, through her veneration of the crucified Christ, comes to bear his curse. In participating in the sufferings of her Son, the church embodies the paradox of the cross. On one hand, the church bears the reproach of those who see Christ's passion as nothing more than a curse; on the other hand, it finds in this very sharing of his cursedness the

[117] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 6 (PO 27.20, 21).

path to redemption—freedom from the curse of death laid upon Adam by the law, which Christ has overcome through his obedience on the cross.[118] Thus, through the witness of the church in the midst of persecution, Adam is being brought to life.

Hippolytus further elaborates this typological correspondence in his interpretation of Isaac's blessing of Jacob. Noting that the blessing was not fulfilled in Jacob but in Christ, he explains the meaning of the scent of Jacob's garments by reference to the church:

> On whom, then, is fulfilled what is said there: "Behold the odor of my son's garments, as the odor of a fertile field which the Lord has blessed?" On no one but on Christ, the Son of God. For the field is the world. And the smell of his garments is all those who believe in him, as the Apostle says: "We are the good smell of Christ among those who are saved and among those who are lost; for these indeed the smell of death, for death; for those, the smell of life, for life."[119]

Drawing on Paul's language in 2 Corinthians 2:15–17, Hippolytus observes that the fragrance of Christ's flesh is dispersed throughout the world through those who believe in him. Called out from the field of the world to partake in the living flesh of Christ offered on the cross, the church becomes an extension of the apocalyptic event of the cross. In this, the church serves as a point of division, separating those for whom its witness to Christ's passion is a death leading to death from those for whom it is a life leading to life.[120]

That the church, for Hippolytus, is distinguished by its participation in the living flesh of Christ becomes further evident in his interpretation of the next part of Jacob's blessing. After describing the aroma of Jacob's garments as that of a fertile field, Isaac asks God to give Jacob, from the dew of heaven and from the fat of the earth, an

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[118] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 5 (PO 27.16, 18, 20).

[119] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 7 (PO 27.26).

[120] The preaching of the cross is implied here, given Paul's language of incense and its interpretation elsewhere in Hippolytus's writings. For it is in the proclamation of Christ by those who believe in him, as Paul explains, that this aroma is spread throughout the world.

abundance of grain and wine (Gen 27:28). Hippolytus sees in this passage a clear reference to the union of the heavenly and the earthly in the flesh of the Word. The Word who descended from heaven is signified by the dew, while the flesh he assumed from the Virgin is represented by the earth.[121] Moreover, the dew and earth are not distinct gifts alongside grain and wine; rather, they are the elements that constitute the fertile field from which the saints sprout and are gathered (συναγομένους) into the storehouse, being justified (δικαιουμένους) by the wine of the Spirit.[122] Thus, the saints, who represent the aroma of Christ's fleshly garments, are also the wheat that springs up from the fertile soil of his living flesh, sharing in the life of the Spirit through participation in the flesh of the Son.

Judah's Garments

Hippolytus returns to sartorial imagery later in the same commentary in his discussion of the blessing of Judah.[123] Citing Jacob's prophecy that Judah would "wash his robe in wine and his garment in the blood of a bunch of grapes" (Gen 49:11), Hippolytus simultaneously distinguishes and relates the two garments referenced in the passage. On one hand, the robe (στολή) washed in wine signifies the flesh of Christ that received the wine of the Spirit of the Father at his baptism in the Jordan. On the other, the second garment (περιβολή) represents the Gentiles, in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that the Lord would "put them all on like a garment (ἱμάτιον)" (Isa 49:18). Just as the robe of Christ's flesh was washed in the waters of baptism and the wine of the Spirit, so the garment of the Gentiles participates in the washing of both water and wine that flowed from the side of Christ upon the cross, receiving in themselves the power of the

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[121] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 7 (PO 27.26).

[122] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 7 (PO 27.26).

[123] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 18 (PO 27.80, 82).

cross as they accept the gospel in faith.[124]

Furthermore, for Hippolytus, the gospel is the self-testimony of the Word who bears witness to himself through the prophets and apostles, themselves representing the fulfillment of the subsequent reference, in Jacob's blessing, to the eyes of Judah gladdened with wine and his teeth whiter than milk. The prophets are the eyes of Christ rejoicing in the Spirit as they announced beforehand his sufferings while the white teeth represent the apostles sanctified by the Word so that they might impart the spiritual and heavenly food of Christ to the saints. Thus, through the preaching of the gospel according to the Scriptures, Christ continues to clothe himself, bringing believers into the same dynamic life of the Spirit opened up to humanity through his passion on the cross.

The Garments of the Heavenly Priest

Hippolytus offers his most elaborate interpretation of the garments of Christ in his *Commentary on Daniel*. In the context of his interpretation of the vision of Daniel 10, aspects of which I have already discussed in chapter 2, he expounds the meaning of the various facets of the garments worn by the figure of the vision:

> "And I lifted," he says, "my eyes and I saw, and behold, one man clothed in a multicolored garment." And so in the first vision he says, "Behold, the angel Gabriel [came] flying." Here however [he does] not [speak] in this way, but he sees the Lord himself, not yet perfectly man, but appearing in the shape of a man just as he says, "And behold, one man clothed in a multicolored garment."
>
> For Christ being clothed with a mysterious multicolored tunic, points out the multiple calling of gifts. Because the priestly cloak was equipped with different kinds of colors to indicate that many nations await the advent of Christ, so that we may be able to be equipped with many gifts.
>
> "And his loins were girt in the gold of Ophaz." Ophaz from the Hebrew, when translated into Greek, indicates, "pure gold."
>
> And so purity was around his loins as his belt. For the Word was destined to bear all of us around his own body with his own love, like a tightened belt. For his own body was itself perfect and we are its members, as we have been united in a perfect body and are embraced by his Word.[125]

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[124] *Ben. Is. Jac.* 18 (PO 27.82).

[125] *Comm. Dan.* 4.36.5–4.37.2 (Schmidt, 169–70; GCSNF 7:280, 282).

For Hippolytus, as I have already discussed in chapter 2, the figure of the vision represents an image of Christ, whose appearance in the shape of a man anticipates his revelation in the flesh. Given that for Hippolytus the subject of the vision's fulfillment is the perfect body of Christ, it is theologically significant that Christ appears already clothed in the multicolored tunic and golden girdle, highlighting the place of the church within God's self-revelation through his image. Jesus's association with those he bears around his own body is further reinforced by Hippolytus's identification of the priestly nature of his garments, which highlights Christ's representative role vis-à-vis humanity.[126] As to the details of the garments, Hippolytus notes how the "mysterious multicolored tunic" (ποικίλον χιτῶνα μυστηρίων) depicts the variety of nations who have been called together in Christ and how the belt of gold, an image of purity, represents the perfection of those who share in the perfect body of Christ.

He explains further how the saints are united to the one, perfect body of Christ, identifying the dynamic of this union as the same which united the Spirit and flesh in Christ's body on the cross: "For the Word was destined to bear all of us around his own body with his own love, like a tightened belt. For his own body was itself perfect and we are its members, as we have been united in a perfect body and are embraced by his Word."[127]

Two additional features of Hippolytus's interpretation of this vision are worth noting. First, the nations represented by Christ's tunic and belt are not regarded as an

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[126] As Helms points out, Hippolytus's exegesis of the passage from Daniel is indebted to the vision of Christ in Rev 1:13 and the priestly garments described in Exod 28. He also notes that Hippolytus's description of the vision serves as a complement to his interpretation of the vision of the woman in Rev 12, in which the human figure represents the church and the radiance with which she is closed represents Christ. Helms, "The Apocalypse in Early Church," 148. This reflects the synergetic ontology between Christ and the church already described. As Zani explains, Hippolytus's interpretation of Christ's garments emphasizes the priestly purpose behind the incarnation, since the flesh of Christ was the necessary condition for his sacrifice. Zani, *La Cristologia di Ippolito*, 216.

[127] *Comm. Dan.* 4.37.2 (Schmidt, 170; GCSNF 7:280, 282). Hippolytus's indebtedness to the apostle Paul's understanding of the church is particularly evident here. Cf. Rom 12:4–5; 1 Cor 12:12–31; Eph 1:22–23; 4:15–16; 5:29–30; Col 1:18, 24.

external accessory but as part of Christ's body itself. The language of "embrace" (βαστάζω) in this passage suggests a profound identification with the nations, such that the Word is not known apart from his revelation in and through the saints he bears around his body.[128] Additionally, while Hippolytus maintains a distinction between the personal body of Christ and his universal body, the union the saints enjoy in him is the very same union that has constituted the flesh of the Word as his own body.

Second, Hippolytus's reference to the perfected nature of the Word's own body avoids the implication that his body is deficient apart from his union with the saints. The distinction is analogous to how Hippolytus understands the Sonship of the Word. The continued perfecting of the body of Christ refers to the perfection of the saints who are united to Christ so that they might grow into the fullness of his already perfect body. For Hippolytus, the crucified and resurrected body of Christ, as the perfect image of God, is the basis for the power of the cross that continues to unfold in the church.[129]

Subsequent details in the vision carry forward the theme of the unity of the nations in Christ. The figure's arms and feet of burnished bronze represent the union of Israel and the Gentiles in Christ.[130] The man's voice, which is described "like the voice of a great crowd," depicts the voice of "all who believe in him" and "utter the oracles of Christ as through his mouth, speaking what is prescribed by him."[131] Through their union with Christ, the saints not only bear witness to him but are constituted as his own mouth,

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[128] The word can also be translated as "borne." This could mean to bear as in the sense of carrying a burden as "embraced" implies, or in the sense of producing, as in giving birth. It is worth noting that elsewhere in the commentary, Hippolytus uses the word in both senses; but the sense here is most likely of bearing, such as one who bears a mark of identity. See *Comm. Dan.* 1.18.9; 4.9.2; 4.9.3; 4.11.3; and 4.50.3.

[129] As Ritschl explains, "The Church continues the work of Christ, but not as if she were separated from Christ. It is Christ who works in and through the Church. The Church is in Union with Christ." Ritschl, "Hippolytus' Conception of Deification," 389.

[130] *Comm. Dan.* 4.37.5 (Schmidt, 171; GCSNF 7:282).

[131] *Comm. Dan.* 4.37.6 (Schmidt, 171; GCSNF 7:282).

through which he bears witness to himself.

Through his application of these various sartorial images, Hippolytus reinforces a perspective that I have observed throughout this chapter. Through its participation in the cross, the church becomes what Jesus is, the visible manifestation of the image and power of God in the world, such that he is not known apart from his continued manifestation in the life and witness of the church. The same union of flesh and Spirit revealed on the cross is now at work in the church, conforming believers to the crucified body of the Son so that they might know and reveal the power of God in their own bodies. For Hippolytus, this dynamic is nowhere more obvious than in the experience of martyrdom. In the final section of this chapter, therefore, I will consider how Hippolytus understands martyrdom as a revelation of divine power.

Martyrdom and the Revelation of Divine Power

Hippolytus's understanding of the church in relation to the revelation of God's single power through the cross is most evident in his theology of martyrdom, a theme that is most prominent in his *Commentary on Daniel*.[132] As scholars have suggested, the commentary was written during the time of persecution under Septimius Severus and there is evidence throughout the commentary that Hippolytus's aim was to prepare his listeners for immanent trials and even death. Within Hippolytus's comments, the figures of Daniel and the three young men emerge as exemplars for the saints, not only serving as inspirational models but prefiguring the experience of the church through their own communion with the Word through suffering.

Readers are first introduced to the young men early in book 1 in what

[132] On the theme of martyrdom in the *Commentary on Daniel*, see W. Brian Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis in Hippolytus: An Early Church Presbyter's Commentary on Daniel* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2008).

constitutes an extended introduction to the Danielic stories that make up the primary subject matter of the commentary. Hippolytus devotes most of books 2 and 3 to the persecutions of Daniel and his friends, but in book 1 he briefly summarizes the story of their selection for special service to the king and their refusal to eat and drink from his table. Hippolytus highlights their role as witnesses by explaining that they refused the king's dainties in order to avoid defiling their pure mouth (καθαρὸν στόμα).[133] Commending them for their fear of God, he explains that they were not "beguiled by the many foods nor enslaved by the pleasure of the wine, nor enticed by kingly glory."[134] The purpose of their resistance to the king's seductions and their preservation of an undefiled and pure mouth is that ultimately they might bring forth a pure word through a pure mouth to the praise of the heavenly Father. There are three significant aspects of this passage related to Hippolytus's broader aims in the commentary that I wish to highlight. The first is the cultic language used to describe the young men, which links them to Christ as the temple of God. The second is the description of the singularity of their testimony, which as I have already demonstrated, symbolizes for Hippolytus the Word's own testimony to himself through his saints. The third is the beguilement of the king, which serves Hippolytus's purpose of situating martyrdom in relation to empire.

Hippolytus uses two words, ἁγνός and καθαρός, to describe the purity of the mouth, the first carrying a sense of consecration, such as that of cultic objects, and the latter carrying a sense of ritual or cultic purity. A third term is ὑμνέω, which Hippolytus uses to describe the function of the word that proceeds from the pure mouth, this being a term commonly used to identify a song of praise that was sung in a cultic setting. The

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[133] With the strong association between the captivity of the young men and the desolation of the temple, the sense of καθαρός as ritual, cultic purity is surely prominent here. While Schmidt translates the phrase as plural ("pure mouths"), the singularity of the phrase is an important part of Hippolytus's intended meaning, as my discussion of the unity of the witness of the saints demonstrates below.

[134] *Comm. Dan.* 1.10.4 (Schmidt, 36; GCSNF 7:22, 24).

three terms resonate with the temple motif found in the book of Daniel, which Hippolytus has already emphasized in the earlier sections of the commentary and which runs throughout the subsequent sections of the work, as I have discussed in the previous chapter. Combined with Hippolytus's description of the young men as those who were "plundered" (ἁρπαγέντες), Hippolytus is making a strong identification between the young men and the holy vessels of the temple.[135]

The second aspect is the singularity of the testimony of the young men, through which they offer their praise to the Father, which is important for two reasons. First, it reinforces the synergetic ontology that undergirds Hippolytus's understanding of the relationship between Christ and his followers, as especially evident in his comments on the voice of the figure of Christ in Daniel 10, discussed above. Second, it highlights a central element in his understanding of the nature of martyrdom, namely the unity of the church's witness. The first emerges more clearly in Hippolytus's comments that immediately follow:

> And so you know, O man (ἄνθρωπε), what has been spoken. The paternal mouth has brought forth an honorable word from itself, so that again a second time the Word, which is begotten by the saints (ὑφ'ἁγίων γεννώμενος), may be shown as always begetting the saints (πάντοτε τοὺς ἁγίους γεννῶν) and itself may be begotten by them again (αὐτος πάλιν ὑφ'ἁγίων γεννώμενος).

As I have already observed in Hippolytus's treatise *On the Antichrist*, he understands the church as the heavenly woman in Revelation 12 who gives birth to Christ through the witness of the saints, a point which he reiterates here, highlighting the synergetic nature of the relationship of Christ and church, as it is revealed through the unity of the church's witness, to demonstrate how believers experience the new birth of the Spirit through martyrdom.

Hippolytus's identification of martyrdom as a work of creation that manifests

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[135] This connection is made in other places in the Scriptures. See, for example, the strong association in Joel 3:5–6.

the power of God revealed in the cross serves to integrate his subsequent interpretation of the story of the fiery furnace. He begins by explaining how the young men came to understand by the Spirit that the words of the prophets in the Scriptures were written concerning them. Looking to the stories of Scripture they came to understand these as paradigms of their own experience, with these stories testifying to the divine presence and power in their own experience.[136] In this way, they were "led on by the Spirit to the pit, contending before myriads of unbelieving men."[137] Indeed, as Hippolytus explains, it is only through the Spirit, who endows human beings with heavenly power, that martyrs of all time and places are enabled to face punishment and death with courage and perseverance, giving up the things of this world and proving themselves disciples of the Word, the heavenly king and master, who has called them to take up their cross and follow him.[138] In other words, the martyrs are the embodiment of the mixture of divine strength and human weakness wrought upon the cross, as described in *Antichr.* 3. Furthermore, as it is by the Spirit that the boys are able to offer a testimony through one mouth, the unity of their witness serves to manifest the power of God that has been revealed through the cross.[139]

Hippolytus further explains how God's work of creation is accomplished through martyrdom in his comments on the experience of the young men in the fiery furnace. Noting how the garments of the young men were preserved in the fire, Hippolytus refutes those who would deny the resurrection as he demonstrates how God's restoration of humanity to immortality in Christ is accomplished through participation in

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[136] *Comm. Dan.* 2.19.1–7 (Schmidt, 75–76; GCSNF 7:96). See my discussion of this in chap. 2.

[137] *Comm. Dan.* 2.19.8 (Schmidt, 76; GCSNF 7:96, 98).

[138] *Comm. Dan.* 2. 21.1–3 (Schmidt, 77–78; GCSNF 7:98, 101); cf. Matt 10:38; and Luke 14:33.

[139] *Comm. Dan.* 2.23.1 (Schmidt, 78; GCSNF 7:100).

the cross.[140] Hippolytus argues, "For if what is corruptible in nature did not receive corruption, how does what is incorruptible in nature, but has died through disobedience, having been made alive again by the power of God, not [truly] be made alive?"[141] If then the garments and cloaks of the young men were preserved in the fire, how much more can one be certain that the naturally incorruptible flesh of the human being when resurrected will enjoy an incorruptible state, having been made alive again by the power of God. Just as the boys were preserved along with their clothing, even so the saints who share in their faith will be preserved whole—in soul *and* body—from the eternal fire.[142] Here Hippolytus presents martyrdom as the restoration of humanity to a condition of immortality, as the sufferings of those who bear witness to Christ serve to perfect their souls and bodies in the image of God.

That Hippolytus understands the fiery furnace as a reference to the participation of the saints in the sufferings of Christ is clear from his subsequent identification of the fourth figure in the furnace as the Son of God, the one who reveals the mysteries of the Father and the one in whom the Father is glorified.[143] It is through their shared communion in the sufferings of the Son that the martyrs experience the perfection of their humanity, becoming themselves the manifestation of the Son in the world. Thus, Hippolytus explains that just as Nebuchadnezzar recognized the Son in the

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[140] *Comm. Dan.* 2.28.4 (Schmidt, 85; GCSNF 7:110). Hippolytus's refutation of the heretics echoes Irenaeus's refutation in *Haer.* 5.9.1–4 (SC 153.106–22). It also reflects Irenaeus's anthropology in several ways. First, it identifies the body as the object of the resurrection, since it is the body that dies. Second, it identifies the soul as that which transmits life to the body, not as life itself but as the means of reception of the Spirit. See especially Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.33.4; 2.34.4; and 5.7.1 (SC 294.350, 360; 153.84–92); as well as Steenberg's discussion of Irenaeus's understanding of the human composition in Steenberg, *Of God and Man*, 38–41.

[141] *Comm. Dan.* 2.28.5 (Schmidt, 85; GCSNF 7:110).

[142] *Comm. Dan.* 2.28.6–7 (Schmidt, 85; GCSNF 7:110, 112).

[143] The identification of the figure in the furnace with Christ was common among early Christian writers. See Bogdan G. Bucer, "Christophanic Exegesis and the Problem of Symbolization: Daniel 3 (the Fiery Furnace) as a Test Case," *JTI* 10, no. 2 (2016): 228. I would argue, however, that at least for Hippolytus the figure does not represent a foreshadowing of the "Logos-to-be-incarnate," as argued by Bucer, but of the incarnate Logos.

furnace, even so the nations are destined to recognize him in the flesh through the witness of the saints.[144]

For Hippolytus, moreover, it is as those who are being born again in Christ, renewed in the image of God through participation in his death, that the martyrs manifest the divine power of the sovereign Creator.[145] Hippolytus notes how the song of the young men, celebrating God's sovereignty over creation, is sung as through one mouth (ὡς δι'ἑνὸς στόματος).[146] Subsequently he explains that not only did the Word extol God with them as from one mouth but that he described the order of creation through their mouth, so that the young men omitted nothing of which is and has been.[147] Hippolytus reflects on this further, demonstrating how the unity of the young men in their witness testifies to the unity of all creation under the sovereignty of God:

> Having done this for one hour in the furnace, you taught the workmanship of creation. For the Word was with you, he who understands the workmanship of creation was speaking through you. For it is wonderful, beloved, what was spoken through hymns by the three boys in the furnace! They left nothing out of what has been created, so that nothing may be considered [to have] independence and autonomy, but embracing and naming all things, both heavenly and earthly and subterranean, they showed all things to be slaves of God who created all things through the Word, so that nothing of creation might boast as being something unbegotten or without beginning.[148]

Hippolytus's point here is twofold. First, it is through their suffering with Christ that the martyrs come to know the sovereignty of God. Experiencing within themselves the mystery of the cross through their participation in the obedience of the

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[144] *Comm. Dan.* 2.33.4–5 (Schmidt, 91; GCSNF 7:122).

[145] Notably, Romanos the Melodist identifies the fiery furnace with the womb of Mary: "You [Mary Theotokos] appeared as the sources of joy, since you conceived in your womb him who once appeared in Babylon and beyond all understanding preserved unburned the Youths unjustly cast into the furnace." Cited in Bucer, "Christophanic Exegesis and Problem of Symbolization," 230.

[146] *Comm. Dan.* 2.29.3 (Schmidt, 85; GCSNF 7:112).

[147] *Comm. Dan.* 2.30.1 (Schmidt, 87; GCSNF 7:114). Hippolytus is referring to the Song/Prayer of the Three Young Children, found in the Theodotian version of Dan 3:51–90.

[148] *Comm. Dan.* 2.30.3–4 (Schmidt, 87–88; GCSNF 7:114, 116).

Son in the power of the Spirit, they come to know the power of the sovereign Creator. Second, it is through their suffering on account of their witness to Christ that the martyrs manifest this creative power. The revelation of divine power through the weakness of the cross is extended in the life of the church. As those being renewed in the image of their Creator, they come to embody the divine presence and power in the world, becoming what the Word is by sharing in his sufferings and death.

For Hippolytus, the demonstration of God's power through martyrdom does not require the death of a saint. Indeed, his conception of martyrdom is broad enough to capture the basic sense of the word as "witness." Thus, in discussing the story of the three young men and their deliverance from the fire, he anticipates a question in the minds of his listeners: why did God deliver the martyrs of old, like Daniel and the three young men, but does not now rescue them? While noting that, ironically, death can be regarded as preferable for a martyr since it protects the saint from a future fall, he explains that the work of God is revealed in both the case of a martyr who is delivered from death and the case of one who is not. Addressing his answer to the "human being," he writes, "Take heed, O man (ὦ ἄνθρωπε), because even at that time God rescued whom he wished to still live, so that the magnificent work of God (γαλεῖον τοῦ θεοῦ ἔργον) may be shown and it may be preached in all the world until now. But whom he wished to testify (μαρτυρεῖν), he, having crowned them, took to himself."[149]

Hippolytus explains that the deliverance of the martyrs reveals God's power, demonstrating that he is able to rescue his slaves whenever he wishes since what is impossible for men is possible for God. However, there are many scriptural examples of martyrs who God instead took to himself so that they might become examples for Hippolytus and his hearers. He explains that if God delivered all, then no one would

[149] *Comm. Dan.* 2.35.3–4 (Schmidt, 92; GCSNF 7:124).

testify. But if all died while testifying, then some of the faithless would reckon that it was not possible for God to save them. Hippolytus then cites a string of examples, including Jonah, Peter, Paul, and Stephen, and notes that there are many Old Testament examples of saints who died for their testimony and many examples of those who were rescued, all demonstrating "that there is one and the same God both long ago and now, who also has authority over his slaves to do the very thing which he wills."[150]

But, for Hippolytus, the definitive proof that the death of the martyrs does not bring God's sovereignty into question is the supreme example of the "King of Glory himself," the Son of God, whose manner of death on the cross reveals the creative work of God.[151] "Was God not able to rescue his Christ, so that he would not have been handed over to the Jews? Yes he was able to, but allowed him to suffer so that we, through the cross of his death, may live."[152] Hippolytus explains that it was because the Lord perceived the plan of God that he surrendered himself fully to the Father's will.[153] Even so, martyrs facing the prospect of death can do so because they know that it represents their crowning with immortality by the Father.[154]

Returning to the theme of the unity of the church's witness, I note that Hippolytus's rehearsal of examples of martyrs from the Scriptures serves not only to distinguish between those who died and those who were delivered but to demonstrate how those summoned as witnesses to Christ participate in a single calling, extending backwards and forwards in time, as God calls humanity as a witness to his divine

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[150] *Comm. Dan.* 2.36.7 (Schmidt, 94; GCSNF 7:126).

[151] As discussed in the previous chapter, Hippolytus's peroration at the end of *Against Noetus* identifies the cross as the ultimate manifestation of God's glory as Creator.

[152] *Comm. Dan.* 2.36.8 (Schmidt, 94; GCSNF 7:126).

[153] *Comm. Dan.* 2.36.8 (Schmidt, 94; GCSNF 7:126).

[154] *Comm. Dan.* 2.38.5 (Schmidt, 96; GCSNF 7:130).

glory.[155] For Hippolytus, witness is constitutive of membership in the body of Christ and participation in the reality of the incarnation. It is witness that unites, in the one body of the Son, the prophets and martyrs of the Scriptures with those who now bear witness through the proclamation of the gospel according to the Scriptures. This is evident in Hippolytus's use of the same vocabulary to describe the indwelling of the Word in the prophets and the indwelling of believers in the Word. In his introductory remarks concerning the visions of Joseph, Hippolytus explains that Joseph bore witness to the Word because the Word by power was dwelling (πολιτευόμενον) in him, using the same word he used to define the church as a community of saints participating (πολιτευομένων) in truth.[156] Likewise, when Isaac, before giving his blessing, declares that he hears the voice of Jacob, Hippolytus understands this to mean that the Word who in Jacob prefigured the mysteries also became (ἐγένετο) the voice of the prophets, making known through them in advance the future.[157] Martyrdom, thus, serves as the visible sign of the goal of the incarnation—the reunion of humanity in the body of the heavenly man, Jesus Christ. Through their witness, the saints are not only united to Christ but, through him, to a universal body of witnesses that extends across time and space. Together, these witnesses manifest the creative power of God as he restores humanity in his one image. For Hippolytus, the mystery of unity is revealed above all in the universal company of the martyrs.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate how the cross serves as both the iconic paradigm and the source of the church's life in Christ. If my examination of the

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[155] *Comm. Dan.* 3.26.1–3 (Schmidt, 124; GCSNF 7:182).

[156] *Ben. Is. Jac.* (PO 27.2, 4).

[157] *Ben. Is. Jac.* (PO 27.22).

christological argument in *Against Noetus* revealed within Hippolytus's incarnational theology a robust theological anthropology—one that understands the human being as the visible revelation of God—my analysis of Hippolytus's exegetical writings has built on this insight to advance the argument of this study in several ways.

First, it has identified the cross as the climactic and pivotal moment in God's creation of humanity in his image. On the cross, the Word weaves the flesh he received from the Virgin with the power of the Spirit through his ultimate act of obedience, granting humanity a share in the incorruptible life of God. As the very instrument of creation, the cross stands as the definitive revelation of divine power.

Second, Hippolytus presents the church as the image of divine power in the world, formed through its participation in the cross. The church embodies the ongoing goal of the incarnation, as the Word descends in the preaching of the gospel and believers are baptized into his sufferings and death, that they might ascend with him in the power of the Spirit, sharing in his incorruptible flesh. As the universal body of the crucified Son, the church's unity—especially in martyrdom—manifests the mystery of the cross, namely God's plan to unite all nations and all creation in his human image, Jesus Christ. Through the witness of the martyrs, the church continues to embody the paradox of the cross, revealing divine power through human weakness.

CHAPTER 5

EMPIRE AS A PARODY OF DIVINE POWER

In this chapter, I turn to Hippolytus's critique of empire, building on the incarnational framework established in the previous chapters. My aim is to illuminate his critique by situating it within both his exegetical and theological vision. However, before doing so, it is helpful to first consider the ideological context to which he was responding.

The first part of the chapter, therefore, examines the nature of empire by tracing its deep roots in the sacral kingship and cosmic religiosity of the ancient Mediterranean world, leading up to its integration into Roman imperial ideology.[1] Rather than focusing on a historical reconstruction of political events, I concentrate on the evolution of religio-political convictions that undergirded Roman political expansion. I then briefly consider the early Christian response to empire, highlighting the tradition within which Hippolytus articulated his own theological critique.

My analysis of Hippolytus's views begins by appreciating his affirmation of earthly political rule and its continued role within the divine economy. I then examine his understanding of political corruption, particularly how it stems from a king's rejection of his creaturely status and mortality. This in turn sets the stage for an extended discussion

[1] It is important to note that my aim in this chapter is to describe Roman imperial ideology by considering how it was understood by those who participated in it. As Allen Brent has noted, "We may believe that we understand the 'real' causes of the failure of Republican government at Rome in the first century before Christ. But our understanding was not that of those overtaken by such events in their historical and social context." Allen Brent, *A Political History of Early Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2009), 91–92. In order to understand the rationale of the Augustan revolution and the subsequent development of the cult of emperor one must consider it in light of the "metaphysical backcloth to political events in which Roman paganism believed."

of Satan's role in political idolatry, both in general and in the context of imperialism. I demonstrate how the corruption of kingship represents Satan's central strategy in mimicking the incarnation as part of his ongoing effort to subvert humanity a second time. By raising the images of kings as centers of universal collective identity, Satan offers humanity a false vision of divine likeness and power, seducing them into believing they can be like God by transcending what makes them human. The chapter concludes with a summary reflection on Hippolytus's critique of empire in relation to the themes of divine image and power.

Roman Imperial Ideology and Its Vision of Divine Power

In his study of kingship in the ancient world, Francis Oakley has reminded readers that "for several millennia at least, it has been kingship and not more consensual governmental forms that has dominated the institutional landscape of what we today would call political life."[2] Indeed, the eras in which democratic and republican forms of government have prevailed in Western civilizations can be seen, from a broader perspective, as historical parentheses. Despite this fact, it has been common within studies of the history of politics and political thought to treat less consensual forms of governance as exceptions to the rule, a tendency that reflects profound differences between predominate Western conceptions of the world following the Enlightenment and the ideological presuppositions that sustained monarchical forms of government for millennia. While not distant necessarily in time, those ideological patterns are separated at a great distance from the modes of thought that have been nurtured in Western modernity.[3] These ideological differences have made it difficult to make sense of what

[2] Francis Oakley, *Kingship: The Politics of Enchantment* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 4.

[3] Oakley, *Kingship*, 13–14.

has been, for much of human history, the commonsense way of understanding political rule.[4]

In order to adequately understand the ideology that undergirded the imperial expansion of Roman power, one must be sensitive to the ways in which kingship was regarded in the ancient world, not as a political institution distinct from the religious but as an inherently sacral office. While Rome's transition from city state to empire unfolded over the course of several centuries, its expansion as a fledgling world power presented it with the predicament of governing a massive expanse of territory, raising the question of how Rome might achieve the inner unity that had eluded the Hellenistic monarchies it had replaced. The Romans would find the answers to these questions within the cultural heritages of their newly conquered territories, integrating sacral notions of kingship into the ideology of the emerging empire.

Divinity in Hellenistic Kingship Theories

By the time of Hippolytus, the attribution of divine honors to the emperor was a long-established practice. Its roots extended deep into models of kingship that developed during the Hellenistic period and was profoundly shaped by the philosophical legacy of Stoicism. The confluence of these and other sources contributed to a vision of

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[4] Francis Oakley, *Empty Bottles of Gentilism*, vol. 1, *Kingship and the Divine in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (to 1050)*, Emergence of Western Political Thought in the Latin Middle Ages (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 1. The distinction between religion and politics is a prime example of these differences. Henri Frankfort explains in his study of kingship in the ancient Near East:

> If we refer to kingship as a political institution, we assume a point of view which would have been incomprehensible to the ancients. We imply that the human polity can be considered in itself. The ancients, however [and as we have seen], experienced human life as part of a widely spreading network of connections which reached beyond the local and national communities into the hidden depths of nature and the powers that rule nature. The purely secular—insofar as it could be granted to exist at all—was the purely trivial. Whatever was significant was imbedded in the life of the cosmos, and it was precisely the king's function to maintain the harmony of that integration. (Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948], 3)

On the applicability of Frankfort's assertions to other ancient cultures, see Oakley, *Kingship*, 17–18.

the emperor as a divine figure and the eschatological center of social and cosmic harmony.

Theories of Hellenistic kingship emerged as an effort to reconcile the heritage of Greek city-states with new configurations of political power. Whereas loyalty had been fostered during the Classical period by a sense of common participation in governance, the new spatial dimensions of transnational empires, which made that same level of involvement unfeasible, required a new center of unity.[5] As Sheldon Wolin notes, "Where loyalty had earlier come from a sense of common involvement, it was now to be centered in a common reverence for power personified."[6]

The philosophical effort to grapple with the intellectual crisis generated by the new situation gave expression to visions of the ideal king.[7] Central to many of these visions was the divinity of the king, borne out in his capacity to establish social and cosmic harmony.[8] The philosophical expression of these ideas was aided by the

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[5] Despite the prominence of the polis during the fifth and fourth centuries, kingship never fully died out in the Greek world. Indeed, as Oakley has noted, the classical era of the polis was brief, being brought to an end by Philip of Macedon's consolidation of power among the Greek city-states. The subsequent expansions under Alexander would mean that the "*direct* governmental legacy of Greece to those who were later drawn into its cultural orbit was to be monarchical rather than republican in nature." Oakley, *Empty Bottles of Gentilism*, 15.

[6] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 69.

[7] As Wolin explains,

> Even before the death of Aristotle in 322 B.C., the classical concept of the "political" was being undermined by a new set of conditions. The emergence of the Macedonian Empire in the fourth century inaugurated an era of large-scale organization which later reached its fullest expression in the Roman world-state. During this period, the tradition of Western political thought underwent a transformation that resulted in drastic modifications of the notational principles governing the accents of classical political philosophy. New priorities appeared, emphases were redistributed, and the phenomena of political life were surveyed from an altered perspective. Yet the political thought of the Hellenistic and Roman period retained much that was familiar. The legacy of Plato and Aristotle was preserved while being modified; a tradition of political thought was in the making." (Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 64)

[8] While some philosophical traditions like the Cynics and Epicureans shifted their orientation from the political thought of the Classical period to moral philosophy, others embraced the subject of kingship, reflecting on the nature of the good king and, in turn, its perversion as tyranny. While few of these texts remain extant, witnesses such as Diogenes Laertius testify to their preponderance during the period. Julien Smith has summarized the image of the ideal king that emerged from these writings under

grassroots development of ruler cults that had emerged in places like Asia Minor during the period of the successor kingdoms.[9] Drawing from the legacy of the Achaemenid and pre-Achaemenid empires, the images of divine kingship that emerged from these practices and their corresponding embrace by Hellenistic rulers represented a recovery of more ancient notions of sacral kingship.[10]

As S. R. F. Price has explained, ruler cults were a key strategy for cities to come to terms with a new type of power.[11] He summarizes the dilemma and its solution as follows: "The cults of the gods were the one model that was available to [the Greeks] for the representation of a power on whom the city was dependent which was external and yet still Greek. By borrowing and adapting this pre-existing model of classification it proved to be possible to accommodate the new kings."[12] The decision to appropriate the model of divine cults rather than heroic cults for the cult of Hellenistic rulers indicates the interplay between conceptualizations of divine power and human power within the

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several headings: divinity, benefaction, presence, and living law. Julien Smith, *Christ the Ideal King: Cultural Context, Rhetorical Strategy, and the Power of Divine Monarchy in Ephesians* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 34–47.

[9] S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 36–37; John Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 164–65. On the grassroots nature (as opposed to foreign imposition) of the cult of emperors, see Pieter J. J. Botha, "Assessing Representations of the Imperial Cult in New Testament Studies," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 25, no. 1 (2004): 14–45.

[10] On the genealogical strands that contributed to the development of Hellenistic imperialism, see John Ma, "Hellenistic Empires," in *The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, ed. Peter Fibiger Band and Walter Scheidel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 327–35. Among the formative legacy of Greek culture was the notion of the "best man" as the one destined to govern, a concept that was likely introduced into the Roman political imagination by Polybius's colleague Panaetius. Francis Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background* (1966; repr., Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2020), 2:459. As Dvornik suggests, the descent of the Roman Republic into civil war and social disorder fostered a sense that a solution would be found in the rule of a best man, paving the way for acceptance of a monarchical regime (Dvornik, 2:461–63).

[11] Price, *Rituals and Power*, 29. See also Scheid, who explains that the motive to elevate the emperor through cultic worship was to define imperial power as "the epiphany of a divine power in the hands of a mortal." Scheid, *Introduction to Roman Religion*, 164–65.

[12] Price, *Rituals and Power*, 30.

Greek imagination.[13] According to Price, by reconfiguring kings as divine beings, Greeks were effectively able to make room within their social imagination for a supreme foreign authority:

> It was by solving the crucial problem of classification that the Greeks were able to represent to themselves otherwise unmanageable power. . . . The significance of the classification of the rule in divine terms is that it disguised the novelty of the monarchies and formed a significant element in the relationship of power between subject and ruler.[14]

For the Greeks, the divinity of the king was evident above all in his ability to establish harmony among the nations. As Julien Smith notes in his summary of Hellenistic notions of kingship, the watershed moment in the development of the cult of rulers was the deification of Alexander the Great following his death.[15] Prior to this, Greek tradition had always maintained a distinction between mortals and immortals, as reflected in the distinction between hero cults and divine cults. But Alexander's unprecedented achievements warranted a new understanding of kingship. Under his reign, the world had been brought into unity (ὁμόνοια) under his rule as κοσμοκράτωρ. As Smith explains, "Alexander's deification, which paved the way for the acceptance of a living, divine, and absolute sovereign, was acceptable to Greeks because he was perceived to have achieved what none before him were able to: the unification of the entire known world."[16] The achievement of universal social harmony under a single sovereignty was proof of the divinity of the emperor, mirroring as it did the universal cosmic monarchy of God. As Diotogenes famously explained,

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[13] For an explanation of the distinction between the two types of cults and Price's argument for the exclusive use of the former in the cult of kings, see Price, *Rituals and Power*, 32–36.

[14] Price, *Rituals and Power*, 52.

[15] Smith, *Christ the Ideal King*, 37; see also A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 278–90.

[16] Smith, *Christ the Ideal King*, 37.

> Now the king bears the same relation to the state [πόλιν] as God to the world; and the state is in the same ratio to the world as the king is to God. For the state, made as it is by a harmonizing together of many different elements, is an imitation of the order and harmony of the world, while the king who has an absolute rulership, and is himself Animate Law (ὢν νόμος ἔμψυχος), has been metamorphosed into a deity among men.[17]

According to Diotogenes, the divinity of the king resides in his identity as the embodiment of the organizing principle of the cosmos. As the embodiment of cosmic unity, the king is the source and center of social unity. Social unity, in turn, is understood as the product of participation in the king's own person. In a very real sense, the king *is* the kingdom.[18]

However, Hellenistic notions of divine kingship alone do not adequately account for the character of Roman imperial ideology. In addition to various other streams of influences, one of the most formative elements in the development of Rome's imperial ideology was a synthesis of Stoic cosmology and long-standing practices of divination for political purposes. Together, these profoundly shaped the identification of emperors as images of divine power in the centuries to come. I will consider how this synthesis served to construe the divine power of emperors before turning attention to the early Christian response to this ideology.

The Unity of the Nations in the Imperial Appropriation of Stoic Cosmology

The reaction of the major schools of Greek philosophy to this new type of power were varied. Given that the Cynics and Epicureans adopted a program of political disengagement, affording only a minimalist role for political association in the cultivation of individual virtue, the task of articulating a new understanding of the individual's

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[17] Joannes Stobaeus, *Stob*. 4.7.61, in *Ioannis Stobaei: Anthologii*, ed. Otto Hense and Curt Wachsmuth (Berlin: APVD Weidmannos, 1909), 4:265.

[18] As Smith explains, social harmony is portrayed within this framework as a form of kingly benefaction, the experience of which is understood as a participation in the king's presence. Smith, *Christ the Ideal King*, 41.

relationship to the social and cosmic order would fall to the Stoics.[19] In their efforts to do so, the Stoics would have a profound impact on Roman imperial ideology through their development of an eschatological vision of cosmic and social order.

Several facets of this eschatological vision would prove especially formative. The first was a cyclical notion of political history and its destiny. This concept was based on Plato's adaptation of Greek mythological notions of the world's descent from an original golden age.[20] Plato's introduction of the notion of cyclical history into the concept of four world ages set a precedent for the Stoics, who would further revise this notion from within a monistic framework.[21] This revision to Plato's theory would find its fullest expression in the Stoic notion of ἐκπύρωσις, a term used to designate a process of destruction and rebirth of the world by fire. This idea represented an eschatology, a vision of the end of history and its new beginning and return to a lost golden age, described as a rebirth (παλιγγενεσία).

The second key Stoic concept, monism, was combined with the notion of cyclical history in ways that would profoundly shape the ideology of the Augustan revolution.[22] The infusion of the world with the divine breath of the Logos meant that

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[19] Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 71–72. Indeed, as Wolin explains, both schools saw political preoccupations as an impediment to the formation of the individual. For both schools, these views of the political depended on presuppositions about the order of nature and humanity's proper participation in it. For the Cynics, political disengagement was warranted by the unnaturalness of cultural convention. They sought to live in harmony with nature, adapting their lifestyles to the freedom of animal life. The restrictions and mores of political community were seen as artificial restrictions on the natural order of life. For the Epicureans, on the other hand, the dissolution of the *polis* as the center of political association and the rise of the Macedonian empire were proof of the disinterestedness of the gods in human affairs. Whereas it was a first principle in the ancient world that cosmic order and political order were symbiotic, the severing of the two in Epicurean thought posited an inward shift, with the individual emerging as the center of philosophical reflection and cultivation.

[20] See, for example, Hesiod, *Works*, in *Theogony. Works and Days. Testimonia*, ed. and trans. Glenn W. Most, LCL 57 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 94–102.

[21] Plato, *Pol.*, 269 C–D, 270 B, 271 D–274 A, in *Statesman. Philebus. Ion.*, trans. Harold North Fowler and W. R. M. Lamb, LCL 164 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 48, 50, 52, 56–64.

[22] Brent, *Political History of Early Christianity*, 95.

divine reason inhered in the universe, lending to the Stoic worldview a strong sense of providence (προνοία). Within this framework, history was understood to unfold according to a universal, rational order.

While in and of itself this fusion of ideas might have been negligible in its political influence, the ancient customs of augury and divination ensured their profound influence on Roman political ideology. Justified according to both custom and philosophical tradition, these practices had long been used to discern signs, *portenta*, of divine approval or approbation, thus playing an important role in the decision-making process of rulers.[23] The appropriation of such practices within a Stoic cosmological framework, however, would shape their use in the development of Roman imperialism in a unique way.[24] As Allen Brent explains in his examination of Roman political theology, the logic of Stoic metaphysics went beyond the usual custom of employing augury to seek divine approval for a course of action. Within the metaphysical eschatology of Stoicism, *portenta* were not merely signs of divine disapproval but harbingers of a dying world, especially as they multiplied. When this perspective was joined with the notion of a final age of iron that would give rise to a new golden age in a new historical cycle, then adverse signs were considered to signal the death and rebirth of the cosmos. Brent explains, "Thus the magistrate seeking or performing an augural act was seeking to discern a new age, a *saeculum nouum* in process of coming into existence."[25]

Lucan is the best source for understanding how this framework informed the Augustan revolution and the imperial ideology that would emerge from it. In his epic

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[23] On the renewal and revival of such practices under Augustus, see Scheid, *Introduction to Roman Religion*, 111–26.

[24] On the gradual imperial control over divine communication, see David Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from August to Theodosius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 146–82.

[25] Brent, *Political History of Early Christianity*, 100–101.

poem on the Roman civil war, he explains the transition from Republic to Empire in the terms of Stoic cosmology and providence laid out above:

> My mind moves me to set forth the causes of these great events. Huge is the task that opens before me—to show what cause drove peace from earth and forced a frenzied nation to take up arms. It was the chain of jealous fate, and the speedy fall which no eminence can escape; it was the grievous collapse of excessive weight, and Rome unable to support her own greatness. Even so, when the framework of the world is dissolved and the final hour, closing so many ages, reverts to primeval chaos, then [all the constellations will clash in confusion] the fiery stars will drop into the sea, and earth, refusing to spread her shores out flat, will shake off the ocean; the moon will move in opposition to her brother, and claim to rule the day, disdaining to drive her chariot along her slanting orbit; and the whole distracted fabric of the shattered firmament will overthrow its laws.[26]

Within this framework, the social chaos of the period of the civil war reflected a cosmic return to the primeval chaos. The decline into disorder was not merely due to a failure to achieve a proper combination of governmental forms but represented the fated result of the cyclical process of the universe. The significance of this is, according to Brent, that "when Octavian claimed the title of Augustus, he was making a claim to stand at the centre of the cosmic process that had secured the *pax deorum* both in nature and in society."[27] The prevalence of this office in imperial propaganda and iconography meant that it was not merely one office among many for Augustus but that it was central to imperial ideology.[28] Suetonius, for example, explains why Octavian chose the title "Augustus":

> Later he took the name of Gaius Caesar and then the surname Augustus, the former by the will of his great-uncle, the latter on the motion of Munatius Plancus. For when some expressed the opinion that he ought to be called Romulus as a second founder of the city, Plancus carried the proposal that he should rather be named Augustus, on the ground that this was not merely a new title but a more honourable one, inasmuch as sacred places too, and those in which anything is consecrated by augural rites are called "august" (*augusta*), from the increase (*auctus*) in dignity, or

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[26] Lucan, *Bell. Civ.*, 1.67–80, in *The Civil War (Pharsalia)*, trans. J. D. Duff, LCL 220 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 6–9.

[27] Brent, *Political History of Early Christianity*, 105.

[28] Brent, *Political History of Early Christianity*, 105.

> from the movements or feeding of the birds (*avium gestus gustusve*), as Ennius also shows when he writes: "After by augury august illustrious Rome had been founded."[29]

As Brent explains, the significance of this was profound for the emergent Roman political theology. Augustus's self-presentation in the *Res Gestae* and iconography as the performer of the *augurium salutis* was only possible from a perspective that understood the world to find itself in a unique moment of the cycle of history: "The returning *saeculum aureum*, with all its metaphysical justification in Stoic terms for which Lucan was to call, would therefore have, as its agent and harbinger, the figure of the emperor as augur."[30] Thus, the emperor came to be regarded as the center, as the mediator, of cosmic and social harmony and order.[31] The Augustan revolution marks more than the second founding of Rome, it signals the return to a universal golden age, a rebirth of the world from the chaos into which it had descended in civil war. The cosmic scope of Augustus's performance is reflected visually in the *Ara Pacis*, which celebrates the *augurium pacis*. Brent summarizes the way in which the altar visually presents Augustus as follows:

> The message of the *Ara Pacis* is that Augustus, as augur, had performed the *augurium pacis*, which Republican magistrates, under a republican constitution with

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[29] Suetonius*, Aug.* 7, in *Lives of the Caesars*, vol. 1, *Julius. Augustus. Tiberius. Gaius Caligula*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, LCL 31 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 158–59. Likewise in Dio Cassius, an act of augury is presented as central to Augustus's re-founding of Rome and inauguration of a new age of peace. See Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 51.20.4, in *Roman History*, vol. 6, *Books 51–55*, trans. Earnest Cary and Herbert B. Foster, LCL 83 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), 54–57.

[30] Brent, *Political History of Early Christianity*, 107; see August, *Res Gest.* 7, in *Compendium of Roman History. Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, by Velleius Paterculus, trans. Frederick W. Shipley, LCL 152 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 354.

[31] On the role of the creation of consensus within imperial ideology, see Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000). As Ando explains,

> The Romans came to regard the arts of government as their special skill and boasted of this both at home and abroad. When provincials took up this refrain, they did so most often by congratulating Rome for having unified the world. The end of the first century A.D. thus witnessed a gradual convergence in rhetoric about Rome and her provinces and about citizens and subjects, producing varied descriptions of the empire as a single community, united by the city of Rome, its emperor, and the common interests of its people. (p. 6)

> time limits on the holding of offices, including sacred ones (with the exception of the *Pontifex Maximum*), had been unable successfully to perform. So superabundant were the consequences of his sacral act that "peace by land and by sea" had been accomplished, together with the earth flourishing in all its fruitfulness. The *pax deorum*, the "peace of the gods," had been achieved, not simply in terms of one society in one geographical territory but universally throughout the world, both in nature and in the new, imperial order in society. Thus the golden age had replaced the age of iron in the fated cycle of human history, and Augustus stood as the agent of a destiny, whose reality the arguments of a brilliant, Stoic philosophy were well able to authenticate along with the way in which divination and augury could rationally be held to discern that destiny. Augustus marked a restoration of the order of society rooted in the order of the cosmos, a setting right of what Lucan described as "nature at variance with itself (*natura discors*)."[32]

The altar depicts a social harmony rooted in a cosmic harmony mediated by Augustus. The cycle of history is discovered to turn upon the person of the emperor.[33] It is in this way that Augustus presented himself, and came to be regarded by many, as an image of divine power, an image that would continue to be used by emperors and their propogandists in the following centuries.

The Renewal of the Model of August under Septimius Severus

While the empire would maintain the trappings of republicanism in the centuries following the "Augustan revolution," subsequent emperors would press further into the monarchical precedents established by Octavian until all pretensions to the former constitutional forms were shed during the reign of Diocletian (AD 284–305) and later Constantine (AD 306–37).[34] A watershed moment in the expansion of imperial power and the ideology undergirding it was achieved during the reign of Septimius

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[32] Brent, *Political History of Early Christianity*, 111–12.

[33] Brent, *Political History of Early Christianity*, 109.

[34] Oakley, *Empty Bottles of Gentilism*, 15. Bang explains how the assassination of Julius Caesar shaped Augustus's approach in this regard: "Having no intentions of suffering a similar fate, Augustus chose to uphold many of the republican institutions and instead tried to harness them to serve his new monarchy." Peter Fibiger Bang, "The Roman Empire II: The Monarchy," in Band and Scheidel, *Oxford Handbook of State in ANE*, 413. On the development of the attribution of divine honors to the emperors during and following the reign of Augustus, see Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, RGRW 175 (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Scheid, *Introduction to Roman Religion*, 159–65.

Severus (AD 193–211), during which Hippolytus would have most likely written *On the Antichrist* and the *Commentary on Daniel*.[35] Severus's reign is important in relation to Hippolytus's view of empire for two primary reasons: his adaptation of imperial propaganda, including the cult of emperors, and the role of the military within his government.

Severus's rise to power followed on the heels of a period of civil unrest into which the Roman Empire had descended after the reigns of the "Five Good Emperors." The assassination of Commodus inaugurated one of the most politically unsettled years in Roman history, known as the "Year of the Five Emperors," with various contenders vying to succeed the murdered emperor. Septimius Severus, a native of North Africa and member of the senatorial class, emerged from this chaos as the victor. His reign, beginning in AD 193, would mark the beginning of the Severan dynasty that would rule until AD 235. Severus's own reign would bring a period of relative stability compared to the discord and violence that immediately preceded his rise to imperial power. Indeed, much of Severus's propagandistic efforts to legitimize his reign focused on presenting himself, much like Augustus and in the style of Augustus, as the founder of a renewed order.[36] A revived and expanded imperial ideology would emerge from the disorder of civil war, much as its original form had emerged from the Civil Wars of the second century BC. In this vein, he employed a variety of methods to recall the glory of the Augustan revolution. As Alison Cooley explains, Severus linked himself to Augustus in several ways:

> Severus drew inspiration from arguably the most charismatic and successful emperor of all, Augustus. As well as championing ostentatiously Augustan causes,

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[35] On the life and reign of Severus, see Anthony R. Birley, *Septimius Severus: The African Emperor* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 1999). For studies in the culture of the Severan dynasty, including Christianity, see Simon Swain, Stephen Harrison, and Jas Elsner, eds., *Severan Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[36] David Shotter, *Rome and Her Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 369.

> Severus showed a keen appreciation of the various techniques by which Augustus had risen to power through civil war and then retained that power, imitating them to serve his own cause in turn. Severus thus strengthened his own legitimacy as ruler by calling to mind the first *princeps*, who, like him, had emerged from civil wars as founder of a new dynasty.[37]

Among Severus's efforts toward legitimatization, the most important was his attempt to "recall the Golden Age of the first *princeps*, Augustus."[38] There are telling parallels in the way in which Severus speaks of his own rise to power and reign. As with Augustus's own autobiography, Severus highlights the central significance of omens and visions, making them even more prominent than they were for Augustus. Cooley argues, "*Omina imperii* had certainly made an appearance in Augustus' version of events, but Severus apparently made them a much more prominent feature in his work, recounting the many omens according to which the inevitability of his rise to power had been predetermined."[39]

Another important aspect of Severus's Augustan persona was his honor as *restitutor urbis*, a title that was attributed to him during his time in Rome. The title, which references his role in bringing the empire out of civil war, primarily had to do with the idea of the emperor as "rebuilder of the city," something for which Augustus was famed. The Augustan legacy in this regard had especially to do with Augustus's temple projects, as reflected in Livy's celebration of Augustus as *templorum omnium conditorem aut restitutorem* ("founder or rebuilder of all the temples").[40] This point is particularly important because for authors like Livy, the disrepair of temples coincided, not coincidentally, with the devolution of the republic into chaos. Thus, the repair of temples

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[37] Alison Cooley, "Septimius Severus: The Augustan Emperor," in Swain, Harrison, and Elsner, *Severan Culture*, 385.

[38] Cooley, "Septimius Severus," 388.

[39] Cooley, "Septimius Severus," 389.

[40] Livy, *History of Rome* 4.20, in *History of Rome*, vol. 2, *Books 3–4*, trans. B. O. Foster, LCL 133 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), 322.

and the concomitant recultivation of civic piety was part and parcel of the restoration of cosmic and social order in the new golden era of the Augustan revolution. Severus's status as *restitutor urbis*, then, did not only serve to identify him with the restoration of Rome but the restoration of social and cosmic order.

Severus's efforts were aided by further developments within the cult of emperors, through which the living emperor came to enjoy an increased prominence and status in imperial worship. Whereas during the mid-second century, provincial cults typically worshiped both living and dead emperors, by the third century the living ruler had become the focal point.[41] During the Severan period, the emperor (and his family) became even more closely associated with the gods. According to Duncan Fishwick, the end result of the developments during this time was that the "Roman emperor stood appreciably closer to the gods than was ever the case before, a development documented *par excellence* at Lugdunum and reflected everywhere in the general emphasis of imperial cult on the living ruler(s)."[42] Severus thus came to stand at the center of an unprecedented level of imperial worship.

Severus's consolidation of power, however, was different from Augustus (and his other predecessors) in one important way. Whereas the military had always played an important role within imperial governance, the legionaries became far more central to Roman government under Severus than they ever had before.[43] The victories that had led to Severus's rise depended on the loyalty of legionaries, and Severus would continue to stake his government on their loyalty by integrating promotion to administrative ranks with the organization of the military. The effect of this was the transformation of the

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[41] Fishwick, *Imperial Cult in Latin West*, 198.

[42] Fishwick, *Imperial Cult in Latin West*, 198.

[43] Shotter, *Rome and Her Empire*, 359–86.

Roman government into a military monarchy.[44] Severus's prioritization of the expansion and welfare of the military would lead to the increasing militarization of civilian life, a pattern that would continue to characterize the Severan dynasty and beyond.[45]

This survey of the imperial activity and ideology of Severus's reign highlights several features that come under direct criticism in Hippolytus's response to imperialism. Hippolytus's identification of the body of the crucified and resurrected Christ as the union of heaven and earth, the temple of God, and the revelation of divine power challenged the structural foundations of Severus's imperial program. Moreover, his sharp denunciation of the use of military conscription and violence as an instrument of unity surely represents a direct assault on Severus's military expansionism. Before turning to his critique, however, I will briefly consider how early Christians responded in a fairly uniform way to imperial claims to divine power, which will help to frame my discussion of Hippolytus.

The Early Christian Response to Roman Imperial Ideology

Early Christian responses to Roman imperialism were mixed. Scholars have been mixed in their assessment of these responses as well but have generally sorted them into one of two categories: one positive and the other negative. Oakley, for example, devotes a chapter to each of these categories under the headings of "Patristic Affirmation" and "Patristic Reservation."[46] Brent contrasts a Lukan vision of the transformation of society through Christian influence with the "root and branch"

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[44] Shotter, *Rome and Her Empire*, 359.

[45] Shotter, *Rome and Her Empire*, 365–67. On the Severan dynasty see Pat Southern, *The Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 37–66.

[46] Oakley, *Empty Bottles of Gentilism*, 79–142.

replacement of worldly structures of power anticipated by the Seer of Revelation.[47] And well before them, the Carlyle brothers distinguished between a majority pro-governmental position and an anarchic spirit fostered by Jewish opposition to Roman rule and the early Christian emphasis on freedom.[48] Perspectives on the predominance of either of these two dispositions have shifted over time, reflecting changing political circumstances in the contemporary West.[49]

Without dismissing the legitimate variety of opinions that existed among early Christian views of the state, making too much of a distinction between conservative and radical streams of early Christian political thought can threaten to obscure the theological rationale of the early Christian response to imperialism.[50] A case in point is Paul's

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[47] Brent, *Political History of Christianity*, 166.

[48] A. J. Carlyle and R. W. Carlyle, *A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West*, vol. 1, *The Second Century to the Ninth* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 94. The Carlyle brothers claim that Paul's instructions in Rom 13:1–7 represent the distillation of a Christian political theory, reflecting the prevailing attitude among early Christian societies of the apostolic period:

> This passage, which is of the greatest importance throughout the whole course of mediaeval political thought, being indeed constantly quoted from the second century onwards, is indeed pregnant and significant in the highest degree. It defines in the profoundest way the Christian theory of the nature of political society, while it furnishes us with the most interesting evidence with regard to the condition of the Christian societies of the apostolic period. (90)

[49] It is more common now to regard anti-imperialism as characteristic of the majority of early Christian writings. From early foundational works that emphasized examination of the historical social background of the empire, such as the classic, A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), such studies have come to incorporate theoretical approaches to the subject as well. The product of these studies include works on the New Testament in its entirety, such as Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), as well as studies of individual New Testament writings and authors. These works helpfully highlight important themes, rhetoric, and other factors in early Christian political thought that would play a role in the imagination of subsequent Christians. For a helpful summary of these, see Judith Diehl's three-part article series: Judith Diehl, "Anti-Imperial Rhetoric in the New Testament," *CurBR* 10, no. 1 (2011): 9–52; Diehl, "Empire and Epistles: Anti-Roman Rhetoric in the New Testament Epistles," *CurBR* 10, no. 2 (2012): 217–63; and Diehl, "'Babylon': Then, Now and 'Not Yet': Anti-Roman Rhetoric in the Book of Revelation," *CurBR* 11, no. 2 (2013): 168–95.

[50] As Young has argued, the ambivalence that scholars have used to distinguish between different streams of early Christian views on government can be found to exist within individual traditions, authors, and works. Frances Young, "Christianity," in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. Christopher Rowe and Malcolm Schofield (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 637–40. In the eloquent words of Hugo Rahner, "The Church of the martyrs, with a sure political instinct illumined by grace, knew how to find a balance between yes and no. Thus she could shout her no to the absolutist state of imperial tyranny and yet whisper a yes formed by lips quivering in death to the same state as it persecuted the Christians: this marks a turning point in the history of the human race." Hugo Rahner, *The Church and State in Early Christianity*, trans. Leo Donald Davis (1961; repr., San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 3.

instructions in Romans 13:1–7, regarding the church's relationship to governing authorities, which has often been taken as the prime example of Christian political conservatism, set in opposition to writings such as Revelation.[51] As Oliver O'Donovan has argued, however, Paul's articulation of the place of government between the first and second advent of Christ is quite novel, both in relation to classical political thought as well as the Old Testament.[52] For Paul, the "primary eschatological assertion about the authorities, political and demonic, which govern the world" is that "they have been made subject to God's sovereignty in the Exaltation of Christ."[53] But the qualifying assertion is necessary to grasp as well: "this awaits a final universal presence of Christ to become fully apparent."[54] As O'Donovan argues, it is within the space opened up by these two assertions that Paul offers a rationale for the continuing relevance and role of government.[55]

Thus, rather than being understood to offer a conservative or quietest position on the relationship of the church to the authorities, Romans 13 presents a fundamental reconceptualization of political authority in the age of the church. In particular, its reduction of the role of government to judgment challenges the ancient image of earthly kings as centers of collective identity. According to O'Donovan, "Membership in Christ replaced all other political identities by which communities knew themselves. No respect

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[51] See Carlyle and Carlyle, *History of Medieval Political Theory in West*, 90; Christopher Rowland, "Scripture: New Testament," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Manley Scott, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), 28. As Rowland notes, no text has been more influential in Christian political theology than Rom 13.

[52] Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 148.

[53] O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, 146. O'Donovan here is thinking specifically of Paul's claim in Col 2:15: "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."

[54] O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, 146.

[55] O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, 146.

can be paid to the role of government, then, as a focus of collective identity, either in Israel or in any other community."[56] But even more than that, the church's conviction regarding the final judgement meant that the judgment of the authorities can only ever be "provisional and penultimate judgments."[57] The import of all of this for ancient politics is profound, representing a direct challenge to imperial claims to divine power, as O'Donovan explains:

> But secular authorities are no longer in the fullest sense mediators of the rule of God. They mediate his judgments only. The power that they exercise in defeating their enemies, the national possessions they safeguard, these are now rendered irrelevant by Christ's triumph. This is what might properly be meant by that misleading expression, the "desacralization" of politics by the Gospel. No government has a right to exist, no nation has a right to defend itself. Such claims are overwhelmed by the immediate claim of the Kingdom. There remains simply the rump of political authority which cannot be dispensed with yet, the exercise of judgment.[58]

Given this profound reconceptualization of political authorization, it is a mistake to pit an apocalyptic presentation of the Roman Empire, such as that found in John's Revelation, against the perspectives of Romans 13 or 1 Peter 2. As O'Donovan notes, the latter do not represent an empirical description of contemporary politics but, rather serve to define the legitimate prerogatives of rulers. But it is precisely such redefinition, the narrowing of governing prerogatives to judgment, that "forced the church to see in the accrual of divine titles and religious symbols by the empire a defiance of resurrection order."[59] For early Christians, empire was understood as a

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[56] O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, 148.

[57] O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, 151.

[58] O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, 151. As Drake explains, the church presented a challenge to imperial ideology because it offered a "means of interceding with deity that had developed independent of the traditional institutions of the Roman state. . . . In a world where the right to intercede with deity on behalf of the state amounted to political power, conflict was, if not inevitable, at least highly probable." Harold Drake, "Church and Empire," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 460.

[59] O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, 152.

reaction to the Christ event, and therefore an eschatological sign. "What Christ's enthronement had effected was to force upon the principalities and powers the alternatives of subjection and outright confrontation and defeat. It had brought in a moment of apocalyptic division."[60] While this idea of a final conflict was inspired by the writings of the prophets, especially Ezekiel and Daniel, serving to integrate the experience of contemporary politics into a sweeping theological understanding of history, the Roman Empire represented something unprecedented in the history of the world, the last death-throes of satanic power in its self-presentation as a messianic sign. It is from within this apocalyptic framework that Hippolytus articulated his own theology of empire, and it is to that subject that I now turn.

Hippolytus's Critique of Empire as a Parody of Divine Power

Hippolytus's critique of empire is profoundly shaped by his identification of Christ as the perfect image of God whose death on the cross represents the definitive revelation of divine power. It is also indebted to Hippolytus's belief that the ongoing sign of this power is the gathering of the nations into the one body of Christ through participation in his self-offering, in obedience to the Father and in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. For Hippolytus, the imperial project of unifying all nations under a single earthly ruler constitutes a satanic parody of the church as the image of divine power. In exploring this condemnation of empire, however, it is important to appreciate that it does not represent a blanket condemnation of earthly political rule but of the corruption of God's purpose for human governing authorities within the divine economy. Thus, as part of my reflection on Hippolytus's critique of empire, I will examine his understanding of the legitimate role that political rulers continue to possess in the present age.

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[60] O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, 152–53.

The Legitimate Role of Earthly Rulers in the Divine Economy

It is important to note how Hippolytus maintains a legitimate role for earthly governing authorities within the divine economy.[61] Hippolytus not only tolerated the idea of governing authorities but could speak positively of the good to which they are divinely ordered in the present age. Governing authorities continue to play an important role in God's plan, though Hippolytus is keenly aware of their proclivity towards idolatrous presumptions about their status within the social and cosmic order.

Throughout the *Commentary on Daniel*, Hippolytus affirms the scriptural principle that earthly rulers have been appointed by God. This principle establishes both the legitimacy of earthly political rule *and* its subordinate role under the universal sovereignty of God.[62] This means that the relationship between the church and governing authorities is not inherently antagonistic. Conflict between the two is due not to the legitimate exercise of political authority by earthly rulers but to the corruption of their authority.

For Hippolytus, Daniel's refusal to obey the edict of King Darius offers an opportunity to reflect on the scope and limits of earthly rule and their implications for Christians. Central to his argument in this section are key texts used by early Christian writers to engage the subject. He presents Daniel as a model illustration of Christ's instructions to his disciples to render the things of Caesar to Caesar but the things of God to God.[63] Despite Daniel's devotion to the king, his refusal to stop praying according to

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[61] Hippolytus reflects Irenaeus's two-sided view of the Roman Empire. On Irenaeus's mixed view see D. Jeffrey Bingham, "Irenaeus and the Kingdoms of the World," in *Sacred Scripture and Secular Struggles*, ed. David Vincent Meconi (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 104–17. This contrasts with Murphy's claim that Hippolytus evidenced an "incontinent hatred" of the Roman Empire. Francis Xavier Murphy, *Politics and the Early Christian* (New York: Desclée, 1967), 107.

[62] See *Comm. Dan.* 3.4.1–2 (Schmidt, 99–100; GCSNF 7:136, 138); see also *Comm. Dan.* 1.3.6; 2.30.6; 3.4.2, 7.

[63] *Comm. Dan.* 3.22.1 (Schmidt, 120; GCSNF 7:176); see Matt 22:21; Mark 12:17; and Luke 20:25.

his customary manner reflects his obedience to Christ's command. The public nature of Daniel's act is of the utmost importance. Anticipating the objection that Daniel could have just prayed in his heart during the day and secretly in his house at night to avoid danger, Hippolytus explains that he desired not to do so because it would have given his opponents a pretext for disputing his fear of God.[64] Hippolytus refuses the legitimacy of a private/public bifurcation of faithful witness. To have prayed in secret would effectively have identified Daniel as a slave of the king rather than a slave of God. "And on account of this he did not give a pretext of slander to those who opposed [him], for whatever one is subject to, by this he is also enslaved."[65] In identifying as a slave of the king rather than a slave of God, Daniel would have placed "the glory of God under the glory of men."[66]

Hippolytus's reasoning echoes the principle articulated in Romans 6:16 and 2 Peter 2:19, highlighting the transference of governance that has taken place for a believer.[67] In such a state, there is no compatibility between ultimate fear of God and ultimate fear of governing authorities. "For those who believe in God ought not to feign nor fear what is ordered [of them] by authorities, lest they do something evil."[68] Instead, loyalty to God is ultimate, requiring of a believer an act of humble defiance when authorities compel them to do something in disobedience to God. Hippolytus argues, "If on account of faith in God they are compelled to do something wicked, they would gladly die rather than to do what is commanded by them."[69]

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[64] *Comm. Dan.* 3.22.2–3 (Schmidt, 120; GCSNF 7:176).

[65] *Comm. Dan.* 3.22.4 (Schmidt, 120; GCSNF 7:176); see also *Comm. Dan.* 3.24.6.

[66] *Comm. Dan.* 3.24.1 (Schmidt, 121; GCSNF 7:178).

[67] Rom 6:16 states, "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?" 2 Pet 2:19 reads, "They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved."

[68] *Comm. Dan*. 3.23.1 (Schmidt, 120; GCSNF 7:176).

[69] *Comm. Dan.* 3.23.1 (Schmidt, 120; GCSNF 7:176).

Hippolytus further clarifies the legitimate scope of earthly rule by considering Paul's instructions regarding submission to authorities in Romans 13. Paul, as Hippolytus argues, does not exhort believers to a blanket submission to government, but rather a submission in so far as their edicts are compatible with the responsibilities of believers before God. He highlights the heart of Paul's conception of the proper role of government, namely that of judgment. It is only with regard to evil that believers should fear the authorities because it is as the avenger of evil that authorities exercise their power, a role which can function even to spur believers on to holiness in the present life.[70] For Hippolytus, this does not ultimately represent a submission to authorities but a submission to God himself: "So that in this respect he said to submit to living holily and piously in the present life, having before [your] eyes the danger of the sword."[71]

Hippolytus is keenly aware that the story of God's people has regularly featured suffering at the hand of rulers who have misused the sword through corrupt judgment, by which good is punished and evil is rewarded.[72] Knowing this, he recognizes that only the eschatological hope of eternal life can sustain a Christian public witness that neither capitulates to the threat of violence nor resorts to violence to oppose it. He finds inspiration for this way of life in the prophets and apostles, who when hindered by the chiefs and scribes "were not prevented from speaking the word since *they obeyed God rather than men*, and on account of this, having vexed the [authorities]," they, "*set them in public prison. But at night an angel spoke to them while leading them out, 'Go, speak the words of this life*.'"[73] The very hope of the message they bore sustained their public witness in the face of persecution. Thus, Hippolytus can affirm that "if on account of God

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[70] *Comm. Dan.* 3.23.2–3 (Schmidt, 121; GCSNF 7:176).

[71] *Comm. Dan.* 3.23.3 (Schmidt, 121; GCSNF 7:176).

[72] See *Comm. Dan.* 3.16.5 (Schmidt, 115; GCSNF 7:166).

[73] *Comm. Dan.* 3.23.4 (Schmidt, 121; GCSNF 7:176, 178); cf. Acts 5:18–20, 29.

someone dies, he ought to rejoice, having found in this eternal life."[74]

While the weight of Hippolytus's concern is the ultimate allegiance of believers to God, his reasoning acknowledges the continuing legitimacy of earthly rule. Established for the purpose of judgment within the present world, earthly rule is affirmed as continuing to play an important part in God's plans, even serving to spur believers on to holiness. But this authority can never lay claim to ultimacy, and when it tries to do so its pretenses are exposed by the faithful witness of the martyrs, who in death transcend the authority of temporal authorities and through their obedience find eternal life.

Moreover, the antagonism between the church and rulers who abuse their authority is always to be one-sided. If indeed Daniel functions as a paradigm for believers in their relationship to governing authorities, then Hippolytus's elaboration of the relationship between the prophet and Nebuchadnezzar earlier in the commentary is striking. Following the latter's dream concerning the demise of his kingdom and his own coming descent into madness, Daniel exhorts the king to redeem himself through good deeds on behalf of the poor. Hippolytus explains that in this way Daniel showed pity on the king, becoming for him "his counselor, like a good doctor who wishes to heal his hurts."[75] He attributes Daniel's silence and troubledness upon hearing the dream to his grief on account of the king's impending fall, expressing thereby his affection for Nebuchadnezzar. For Hippolytus, Daniel's affection is not coincidental but integral to his witness, with his emotions serving a redemptive purpose, "so that in this even the king himself might be sorely pricked and, when he did what was spoken by the prophet, he would be able to be saved."[76] For Hippolytus, the church desires not the destruction of

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[74] *Comm. Dan.* 3.24.2 (Schmidt, 121; GCSNF 7:178).

[75] *Comm. Dan.* 3.7.3 (Schmidt, 104; GCSNF 7:146).

[76] *Comm. Dan.* 3.7.4 (Schmidt, 104–5; GCSNF 7:148).

wicked rulers but their repentance and reform through the witness of the faithful.[77]

The Corruption of Political Rule as a Rejection of Creatureliness and Mortality

Hippolytus, however, is under no delusions about the proclivities of earthly kings. His description of the role of governing authorities is an affirmation of their divinely ordained purpose rather than an empirical observation about the legacy of human rulers. From the kings of Israel to the kings of Gentile nations, history, for Hippolytus, is replete with examples of corrupt rulers who abused the authority granted to them by their sovereign Creator.[78] But how does Hippolytus understand the corruption of earthly rule? What precipitates it and what shape does it take? For Hippolytus, the figure of Nebuchadnezzar represents one of the clearest and most important examples of political corruption. The stories of Nebuchadnezzar thus become, for Hippolytus, a unique opportunity to reflect on the nature of political corruption in his *Commentary on Daniel*.

He begins with the story of Nebuchadnezzar and the three young men, demonstrating the nature of political idolatry through the king's image and persecution of those who refused to worship it. Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's original dream granted the king a privileged place in a historical succession of empires while also implying the transience of his kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is represented by the

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[77] Given Hippolytus's views on the last days, it might be tempting to assume that he takes a passive approach to the church's relationship to empire. But for Hippolytus, the faithful witness of the church is by no means a way of just holding out until the coming of Christ. His call to martyrdom represents a proactive political project that not only preserves the integrity of the church's identity but also serves as an indispensable resource for earthly rulers. As Rahner eloquently explains, Hippolytus's critique of empire does not represent an "expression of an impotent longing or a weary denial of people who fixed their eyes on the hereafter and, seeing the state only as the 'work of Satan,' accepted its existence patiently and humbly as a cross to be borne." Rahner, *Church and State in Early Christianity*, 6. Davis's (trans.) use of the colloquial expression "cross to be borne" for his translation has the unintended effect of diminishing the centrality of the cross to Hippolytus's understanding of the church's political vocation. On the politics of martyrdom in the second and third centuries, see Helen Rhee, *Early Christian Literature: Christ and Culture in the Second and Third Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 171–88. Rhee's distinction between early Christian apologetic literature and martyr literature is overplayed in my judgment however.

[78] See, for example, the testimonies of the reigns of Zedekiah/Jeconiah (*Comm. Dan.* 1.3.6 [Schmidt, 30; GCSNF 7:8]); and Sennacherib (*Comm. Dan.* 3.4.8 [Schmidt, 101; GCSNF 7:140]).

head of gold and depicted as a golden era—a reign that subsequent kings, represented by increasingly baser metals, would fail to replicate. Nevertheless, it is one that is to give way to others.

For Hippolytus, Nebuchadnezzar's subsequent erection of an image is prompted by his remembrance of this dream, but it is a memory clouded by the king's own arrogance. He explains how the king had been puffed up with pride by Daniel's identification of him as the golden head of the statue—which, it is important to remember, takes the form of a human being—and decided to create a golden image as the antitype of the one depicted in the dream.[79] Significantly, the new image revised the one depicted in the dream by extending the gold of the head to the entire body, suggesting Nebuchadnezzar's identification of his kingdom as a universal golden era. For Hippolytus, the king's image has the intended effect of identifying the king as an image of universal divine sovereignty, granting him the privilege of serving as an object of divine worship: "so that he might be worshiped as God by all."[80]

Hippolytus's subsequent reflections on the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar elaborate the nature of his idolatry. He identifies the punishment described in the dream from Daniel 4 as a divine response to the king's raising of the image. He explains that the vision of the dream serves to remind the king that he is under the authority of God despite ruling over all the kings of the earth and that his kingship is a divine gift rather than a personal achievement.[81] The punishment is not intended merely as a lesson for Nebuchadnezzar but as an education for all rulers. As Hippolytus explains, "He received this punishment from God as an example (ὑπόδειγμα) and model (ὑπογραμμὸς) which was [meant] for all men (πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις), both tyrants (τυράννοις) and kings

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[79] *Comm. Dan.* 2.15.2 (Schmidt, 73; GCSNF 7:90, 92).

[80] *Comm. Dan.* 2.15.2 (Schmidt, 73; GCSNF 7:90, 92).

[81] *Comm. Dan.* 3.4.1–2 (Schmidt, 99–100; GCSNF 7:136, 138).

(βασιλεῦσιν), so that they may not brag with thoughts above [the station of] man (τὰ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον φρονοῦντας ἀλαζονεύεσθαι)."[82] For Hippolytus, the grave error that lies behind Nebuchadnezzar's actions is a personal accounting of his kingship that fails to reckon with his own humanity. Indeed, as Hippolytus demonstrates from the Scriptures, the failure of kings to reckon with their own humanity represents the core of political idolatry, blinding earthly rulers to the heavenly Lordship under which they are called to exercise their authority.[83] The punishment of Nebuchadnezzar in turn serves those who might be tempted to lift themselves up against God by disclosing the danger they are placing themselves in so that they "may fear God, seeing that 'they also have a Lord in the heavens.'"[84]

More specifically, for Hippolytus, it is a failure to reckon with one's *mortality* as a fallen human being that corrupts the rulers of the earth. To make this point, Hippolytus draws on the example of Antiochus Epiphanes, who in his pride lifted himself up against the slaves of God. Hippolytus notes how it was through the divine scourge of the king's physical suffering that he came to salvation, his dying words serving as a testimony to the rulers of the earth. In despairing of himself and "coming to the knowledge of the rest of mankind," Antiochus was able to confess, "It is just to be subject to God, and a mortal (θνητὸν) should not consider himself equal to God (ἰσόθεα)."[85]

For Hippolytus, the corruption of earthly rule resides in the personal idolatry of kings who strive to be like God without reckoning with their own mortality. Not only do they forget the gratuitousness of their authority, but they come to conceive of themselves

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[82] *Comm. Dan.* 3.4.4 (Schmidt, 100; GCSNF 7:138).

[83] As Hippolytus explains elsewhere, the elders who falsely accuse Susannah were unable to judge righteously because they could not "look up to heaven with a pure heart." *Comm. Dan.* 1.16.3 (Schmidt, 43; GCSNF 7:36).

[84] *Comm. Dan.* 3.4.4 (Schmidt, 100; GCSNF 7:138).

[85] As cited in *Comm. Dan.* 3.4.6 (Schmidt, 100; GCSNF 7:138, 140); cf. 2 Macc 9:12.

as icons of divine sovereignty, appropriating for themselves the prerogatives of their heavenly Lord. Nebuchadnezzar's conceit is to imagine the destiny of his kingdom in terms of a human body overlaid in pure gold rather than the dust of the ground to which the first Adam must return.

But there is more to the matter than this. For Hippolytus, the arrogant pretense to self-creation is a delusion not only because it fails to recognize the sovereignty of the Creator but because it also fails to discern behind the façade of human pride the machinations of a different being altogether. Political idolatry is, above all else, the work of the devil. To more fully understand Hippolytus's critique of empire, one must not only consider his explanation of the inner dynamics of the human heart but the identity and strategy of the one who seeks to manipulate it for his own malicious purposes.

The Divine Images of Kings as the Work of Satan

Hippolytus's apocalyptic reading of the Scriptures serves not only to disclose the presence of Christ within the sacred writings but also the presence of humanity's archenemy. As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, Hippolytus's eschatological reading of the figures and events of the Scriptures according to the basic pattern established in the creation accounts of Genesis serves to frame history as the unfolding of God's creation in Christ. One of the effects of such an approach is to unveil the presence and work of Satan in ways that had been previously hidden but that can now be known through the revelation of the mystery of the economy, Jesus Christ. Through this approach, Hippolytus is able to demonstrate how the social conflict between church and empire is an ongoing manifestation of a cosmic conflict between God and Satan for God's chief work, the human being. Building especially on the Revelation of John,

Hippolytus identifies the perennial strategy of the devil as a parody of the incarnation.[86]

The devil features prominently in several of Hippolytus's biblical commentaries. In the *Commentary on Daniel*, Hippolytus identifies him as the "ruler of this age."[87] He identifies the devil's aim as the ensnaring of the human being a second time in order to kill him (παγιδεύσας ἐκ δευτέρου πάλιν ἀποκτείνῃ τὸν ἄνθρωπον), recapitulating his original strategy in the garden of Eden.[88] Throughout the commentary he identifies the special place of human rulers in the devil's strategies of seduction and violence, identifying him as the primary agent in the opposition to the church. Hippolytus's typological reading of Scripture enables him to identify figures from the past whose manipulation by Satan foreshadows the enemies of the church and, ultimately, the antichrist.

Indeed, as Hippolytus's commentary on the story of David and Goliath makes clear, the final climactic conflict between the church and the antichrist serves as an eschatological lens by which to understand the conflict between God's people and the rulers of the world throughout history. In that commentary, he interprets the Elah Valley as a symbol of the world, which he portrays as a womb, the concupiscence of which gives birth to Goliath, the son of the devil. Hippolytus draws attention to the serpentine description of Goliath's armor, the dimensions and weight of which not only identify Goliath's pedigree but indicate the universal span of the devil's work and the time of the fulfillment of his conflict with Christ, namely five thousand years from the creation of the world, culminating in the advent of the antichrist. Thus, for Hippolytus, while the story of

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[86] Hippolytus's understanding of satanic parody is shaped most profoundly by the book of Revelation. On the theme of satanic parody in that work, see Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1993), 431–41.

[87] *Comm. Dan.* 1.16.3 (Schmidt, 43; GCSNF 7:36, 38).

[88] Hippolytus's identification of Satan with the serpent is ultimately inspired by John, who is the first to make this explicit identification (Rev 12:9); see Elaine Pagels, "The Social History of Satan, Part Three: John of Patmos and Ignatius of Antioch: Contrasting Visions of 'God's People,'" *HTR* 99, no. 4 (2006): 488.

David and Goliath harkens back to the events of Genesis 3, the events are understood eschatologically, being interpreted backwards in light of the revelation of God's Son and the incarnation of the son of the devil, the antichrist. Like the incarnation of the Word, Satan's project has been unfolding from the very beginning of the creation of Adam.

That *incarnation* is an appropriate term for describing Hippolytus's understanding of the work of the devil is substantiated by Hippolytus's comments throughout the Daniel commentary as well as his reflections on the antichrist in his treatise by that name. The language he uses to describe the work of Satan throughout the former serves to draw various parallels with the incarnation of the Word. One of these is his use of the Greek verb κατανύσσω to describe the manner in which Satan manipulates the hearts of human rulers. In the story of Susannah, Hippolytus explains that the wicked elders "were both sorely pricked (κατανενυγμένοι) concerning her and they did not report their grief to one another because they were ashamed to report their lust, because they wanted to have intercourse with her."[89] In identifying the fulfillment of the story in the conflict between believers and the rulers of the Jews and Gentiles, he identifies the devil as the source of this pricking:

> For what was spoken has also truly happened, because the two peoples, being sorely pricked (κατανυσσόμενοι) by the working (ἐνεργοῦντος) of Satan in them, always wish to conduct persecutions and oppressions against the church, since they are zealously seeking to utterly destroy her, though these themselves are not in agreement with each other.[90]

Of particular interest is how Hippolytus uses the verb in the rest of the commentary. While he sometimes uses it more generally to refer to figures such as Susannah or Nebuchadnezzar being disturbed in their hearts,[91] he also uses it in several

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[89] *Comm. Dan.* 1.16.4 (Schmidt, 44; GCSNF 7:38); cf. Sus 10–11.

[90] *Comm. Dan.* 1.16.4 (Schmidt, 44; GCSNF 7:38).

[91] *Comm. Dan.* 1.21.1; 2.3.1; 2.26.1 (Schmidt, 50, 64, 81; GCSNF 7:48, 72, 106).

places to refer to the work of the Word in the heart of a king. For example, when Nebuchadnezzar sees the Son of God in the fiery furnace with the three young men, Hippolytus considers how it came to be that the king could see and confess such a one: "Who pricked (κατανύξας) your heart so that you plainly spoke such a word?"[92] Furthermore, Hippolytus asks, why was it that this was revealed to the king alone and none of his satraps? The answer is found in a proverb that carried profound political implications: "It is because it is said, 'the heart of the king is in the hand of God.'"[93] For Hippolytus, this means that it was none other than the Word, Jesus Christ, who moved the heart of the king so that recognizing the Word's own form in the fire, he might pay homage. "The hand of God itself, the very thing which was the Word, pricked (κατένυξεν) the heart of the king, so that when he recognized this one in the furnace, he might glorify him."[94] For Hippolytus, this is ultimately fulfilled in the revelation of the Son to the nations in the incarnation of the Word:

> And this is not to be idly understood by us. For when the sons of Israel, seeing the Son of God in the world, were destined not to believe, Scripture proved that the nations were destined to recognize him in the flesh (τὰ ἔθνη τοῦτον ἔνσαρκον ἐπιγινώσκειν), when long ago Nebuchadnezzar seeing him not of flesh, observed him in the furnace and confessed him to be a son of God.[95]

Hippolytus's use of the verb thus establishes a contrast between the incarnational work of the Word and the work of Satan in the hearts of rulers. Whereas the Word illuminates the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, enabling him to recognize the Son of God as the companion in the fire, Satan blinds the eyes of rulers to their heavenly exalted Lord.

Thus, for Hippolytus, Satan's relationship to unjust rulers is not extrinsic. His presence in them is more invasive, more incarnational. Throughout the *Commentary on*

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[92] *Comm. Dan.* 2.33.2 (Schmidt, 91; GCSNF 7:122).

[93] *Comm. Dan.* 2.33.3 (Schmidt, 91; GCSNF 7:122); cf. Prov 21:1.

[94] *Comm. Dan.* 2.33.4 (Schmidt, 91; GCSNF 7:122).

[95] *Comm. Dan.* 2.33.5 (Schmidt, 91; GCSNF 7:122).

Daniel, rulers are presented as the form the devil prefers to assume in his attempt to subvert humanity. Hippolytus describes him as disguising himself in the elders just as he had assumed the form of a serpent in the garden: "For just as then in the garden the devil was hidden in the serpent, in this way even now, after hiding himself in the elders he craves his lust, so that again a second time he might destroy Eve."[96] Hippolytus describes the elders as "lawless rulers and leaders (παρανόμων ἀρχόντων καὶ ἡγουμένων) who are filled with diabolical activity" (διαβολικῆς ἐνεργείας μεμεστωμένων).[97] Given how the elders prefigure the Jewish and Gentile opponents of the church, Hippolytus's interpretation insinuates the presence and activity of Satan among those who would drag Christians to the authorities, accusing them of violating the decrees of Caesar in order to condemn them to death.[98]

The devil's preference for the form of human rulers is clearly due to the power of the sword wielded by them, but this is not the only reason. The power of violence is secondary to the power of seduction through the allure of kingly glory. Thus, the trial of Daniel's companions, which Hippolytus summarizes as a "crowning against the devil," begins not with the threat of persecution but seduction: "They were not deluded by musical skill nor enslaved by the pleasure of the instruments, nor carried away by the deceit of the Babylonians, nor subdued by the decree of the king, nor did they bend their knees before the golden image, which was wrought with a hammer."[99]

In a way reminiscent of Jesus's temptation in the wilderness, Hippolytus renders the interaction of the three young men and the king as a threefold trial.[100]

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[96] *Comm. Dan.* 1.19.4 (Schmidt, 49; GCSNF 7:46).

[97] *Comm. Dan.* 1.20.2 (Schmidt, 49; GCSNF 7:46).

[98] *Comm. Dan.* 1.21.3 (Schmidt, 50; GCSNF 7:48, 50).

[99] *Comm. Dan.* 2.18.2 (Schmidt, 75; GCSNF 7:94, 96).

[100] *Comm. Dan.* 2.24.1 (Schmidt, 79, GCSNF 7:102).

Nebuchadnezzar's multipronged approach begins with the allurement of the statue and is met with the denial of the image's worth by the companions. Only then does the king move on to the threat of persecution. It is in first refusing the allurement of the image and then in enduring the consequent persecution that the faithful martyrs safeguard themselves, giving no pretext for the devil.[101]

Later in the commentary, in applying the story of Nebuchadnezzar's punishment, he warns his hearers not to devote themselves to the persons of human kings (προσώποις ἀνθρώπων βασιλέων) because hope in man is vain (ματαία γὰρ ἐλπὶς ἐπ'ἄνθρωπον).[102] In elaborating the point, Hippolytus identifies kingly benefaction as a particularly potent source of temptation. He exhorts his hearers, "Let us not, for the sake of gifts, flatter rulers who are set in authority, but rather adhering to God alone and doing what is pleasing to him, let us also now continue without danger in the present life and let us readily flee from the judgment which is to come."[103] The exhortation appeals to the mortality of earthly rulers as the basis for not placing one's trust in them. The mortality of the king limits his benefaction to earthly, temporal gifts. Not only do these gifts serve no eternal good; they are also vulnerable to changing political circumstances, failing to guarantee security even in this life.[104] Moreover, how can one confidently put one's trust in the glory of kings who, as the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar illustrates, are unable to rule their own souls?[105]

Hippolytus's identification of kingly benefaction as a key strategy of the devil is especially significant given how kingly benefaction was regarded in the ancient world.

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[101] *Comm. Dan.* 2.24.7 (Schmidt, 80; GCSNF 7:102).

[102] *Comm. Dan.* 3.6.2 (Schmidt, 80; GCSNF 7:144).

[103] *Comm. Dan.* 3.6.2 (Schmidt, 80; GCSNF 7:144).

[104] *Comm. Dan.* 3.6.3–6 (Schmidt, 103; GCSNF 7:144, 146).

[105] *Comm. Dan.* 3.7.2 (Schmidt, 104; GCSNF 7:146).

As Julien Smith has noted in his summary of Hellenistic notions of kingship, benefaction was not regarded merely as transactional but as a participation in the personal glory of the king by recipients of his gifts.[106] For Hippolytus, the benefaction of earthly kings mimics the benefaction of the heavenly king. Just as humanity is called to participate in the glory of Christ through participation in his body, even so earthly benefaction represents a share in a king's personal glory. Kingly benefaction thus makes a fitting instrument for the devil as he seeks to mimic the incarnation by replicating the divine benefaction extended to humanity in the Son of God.

Among the stories of Daniel, the narrative of Nebuchadnezzar and the three young men is the clearest example of Satan's parody of the incarnation through the assumption of the image of kings. This insight depends on several seemingly insignificant details to which Hippolytus draws the attention of his hearers. The first is Nebuchadnezzar's decision to have the young men bound before throwing them in the fire, which Hippolytus takes as evidence for Satan's manipulation of the king: "But you are not the one who does these things, but another in you, who works these things."[107]

The second clue is the change in the king's appearance (μορφὴ) after being rebuffed by the young men: "For Nebuchadnezzar was one [person] and became another. For the king was a man who in the beginning feared God. Then, having been lifted up against God he changed, mimicking the works of the devil (διαβόλου ἔργα μιμούμενος)."[108] For Hippolytus, the changing of the king's form is a critical detail since it exposes the king for what he is: a human being under the sway of the deceiver. Citing Malachi 3:6 ("I am God and I do not change"), he argues that since God has been shown to be unmoved (ἄτρεπτός) and unchangeable (ἀναλλοίωτος), the change in the king's

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[106] Smith, *Christ the Ideal King*, 40–41.

[107] *Comm. Dan.* 2.27.2 (Schmidt, 82; GCSNF 7:106, 108).

[108] *Comm. Dan.* 2.27.4 (Schmidt, 83; GCSNF 7:108).

appearance serves to expose his pretense to divinity:

> The form of the king was changed so that he may be easily perceived as being a man and [so that] the deceiver who recklessly operates in him (ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνεργῶν πλάνος εὐχερῶς ἐπιγνωςῇ), may be recognized, who at all times mimics the works of God (πάντοτε τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔργα μιμούμενος) and wishes to beguile man in various ways (ποικίλοις τρόποις τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐξαπατῆσαι βουλόμενος).[109]

In being lifted up against God, Nebuchadnezzar mimics the works of the devil, who at all times mimics the works of God. The description here is of a human being who not only lacks the capacity to control his own soul but who is manipulated by the devil. In this way, the image of the ruler reemerges as the preferred disguise of the devil in his imitation of the works of God for the purpose of subverting humanity.

Hippolytus's subsequent comments on the image erected by Nebuchadnezzar serve to clarify how the devil works through the form of the king. As I have discussed previously, Hippolytus understands the image raised by the king as an imitation of the crucified and resurrected body of Jesus, the Son of God. He reads the significance of the statue in this way through the lens of a theological anthropology that understands Christ, as the true human being, to be the image and likeness of God and the one in whose authority the sovereignty of the one God has been revealed. In Hippolytus's reckoning then, the statue, which he understands to be the image of Nebuchadnezzar, represents an iconic vision of divinity apart from the humanity of Christ. It serves as an image of glory bereft of the humble obedience to which the human being has been called in his relationship with his Creator. It embodies the original promise of the serpent in the garden—to be like God without obeying him, to be like God without being properly human. The image of a king functions so well as a devilish disguise because it is to kingship that the human being has been called in his imitation of God. Satan's strategy is not to offer a different promise but a different version of the same. Yet Satan can offer

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[109] *Comm. Dan.* 2.27.4 (Schmidt, 83; GCSNF 7:108).

nothing more than a parody of the true humanity and true divinity revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and nothing more than a parody of the sovereignty of God made known on the cross.

For Hippolytus, Nebuchadnezzar's image is paradigmatic for a satanic project that takes various forms. He notes that "then Nebuchadnezzar made [only] one image, but now the deceiver is devising more [such things] in the world, so that through the many spectacles (θεαμάτων) he might pass through all men (τοὺς πάντας ἀνθρώπους διοδεύσῃ)."[110] Through the proliferation of many images Satan extends his presence and work within humanity, his ambition being nothing less than the subversion of all human beings. By bringing human beings into submission to earthly idols, he turns their gaze from heaven and its beauty so that those who "do not recognize the God of this [heaven]" are unable to be saved.[111] "These things, Hippolytus summarizes, "are the handiwork (τεχνάσματα) of the devil."[112] The work of the devil has always been the seduction of humanity through false images of the true humanity and divinity revealed in the heavenly man, Jesus Christ. It is as part of this strategy that Satan resorts to the seductive allure of kingly glory through human rulers.

As I have already noted, however, these various images represent foreshadowings of something more to come. Within the early Christian apocalyptic imagination, the incarnation provokes an unprecedented level of diabolical activity that will eventually culminate in the manifestation of a single human figure in whom Satan will concentrate all of his presence and power. To more fully appreciate Hippolytus's understanding of empire as a satanic parody of the incarnation, it is necessary to consider how the foreshadowings of figures such as Nebuchadnezzar come to full fruition in the

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[110] *Comm. Dan.* 2.27.10 (Schmidt, 84; GCSNF 7:108).

[111] *Comm. Dan.* 2.27.10 (Schmidt, 84; GCSNF 7:110).

[112] *Comm. Dan.* 2.27.11 (Schmidt, 84; GCSNF 7:110).

figure of the antichrist. To do so, it is also necessary to consider Hippolytus's understanding of the place of Rome within the historical succession of empires.

Satanic Parody in the Roman Empire

Rome occupies a unique place within Hippolytus's conceptualization of the history of the world as well as Satan's grand parody of the incarnation. Having discussed the theme of satanic parody in the previous sections and examined Hippolytus's broader understanding of the incarnation in previous chapters, I have provided a better position to appreciate more fully his assessment of the Roman Empire. In order to do so, it is also necessary to consider how Hippolytus situates the empire within the events prophesied in Daniel 7–12 and corroborated by the witness of the Revelation of John.

The Roman Empire as the Fourth Beast

Beginning with the vision of the four beasts, the Ancient of Days, and the Son of Man in Daniel 7, Hippolytus interprets these in a prophetically literalistic fashion, understanding the beasts to bear reference to four kingdoms, successively the Neo-Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Macedonians, and Romans. He identifies within the descriptions of the beasts details that correspond to characteristics of the corresponding kingdoms.[113] As regards the fourth beast, the kingdom of the Romans, Hippolytus takes the descriptions of the beast's iron teeth and its eating and trampling as indicative of the fact that no kingdom would be left after it, except for the ten horns which grew from it. From among these ten horns, the emergence of the one horn described in the vision signals the advent of the antichrist, inaugurating the consummation of the cosmos.[114] Furthermore, the beasts thus described correspond to the image which Nebuchadnezzar

[113] *Comm. Dan.* 4.1–4 (Schmidt, 130–35; GCSNF 7:192–204).

[114] *Comm. Dan.* 4.5 (Schmidt, 135; GCSNF 7:204, 206).

received in a dream, with the Neo-Babylonians figured in the gold head, the Medo-Persians in the silver chest, the Greeks in the bronze stomach and thighs, and the Romans in the iron legs and feet of iron and clay. The toes of the image, corresponding to the ten horns of the fourth beast, are of particular importance to Hippolytus as they prefigure the devolution of the kingdom of the Romans into a state of anarchy. Citing the explanation of Nebuchadnezzar's vision in Daniel 2:43, Hippolytus understands the mixing of iron and clay in the feet to refer to the failed attempt to unite various nations into a universal kingdom through inter-national marriage ("when they shall be commingled in the seed of men, but they shall not be united with one another.").[115] The ten horns and toes represent the disintegration of the sham unity of Rome: "Men will not be able to agree with one another, but others from here and there shall carry disorder and divide the royal [kingdom] (τὸ βασίλειον) among themselves according to [their] nation (ἔθνη)."[116]

For Hippolytus, the toes of the image are an especially important detail because they represent the failure of Rome's highest ambition. In explaining how this is the case, he begins by raising the question of why the three preceding kingdoms are identified as specific animals but the kingdom of the Romans is merely described in terms of its strength and ferocity. Before providing his hearers with an answer, he prepares them with an exhortation: "Understand, O human being (ὦ ἄνθρωπε), and glorify the Lord."[117] The statement signals a climactic point in the commentary. It signals a point of illumination in which the mysteries concealed in the details of the vision are about to

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[115] *Comm. Dan.* 4.7.5 (Schmidt, 137; GCSNF 7:210), citing Dan 2:43. It is important to note that in the ancient world, nations (ἔθνη) largely represented tribal groups distinguished by language and other ethnic markers; thus intermarriage was the most substantial means of inter-national unity.

[116] *Comm. Dan.* 4.7.6 (Schmidt, 137; GCSNF 7:210).

[117] *Comm. Dan.* 4.8.3 (Schmidt, 138; GCSNF 7:212). I provide my own translation here instead of Schmidt's ("Consider, O man, and glorify the Lord!"). Throughout the commentary, νοέω is used to describe the spiritual understanding of those endowed with it by the Word. Thus, Hippolytus's statement is more of an indication of pending illumination rather than an invitation to reflection. Furthermore, as I will demonstrate below, there is an important reason deriving from the book of Daniel as to why Hippolytus addresses the exhortation to the "human being."

be disclosed through the ministry of Word and Spirit to their interpreter and hearers, reflecting a pattern found throughout the commentary. Indeed, the statement represents in nuce one of the basic themes of the work, that those who have been privileged to understand the plan of God through the sacred writings are able to give glory to him.

What, then, is Hippolytus's explanation of the missing details? It is worth citing his answer before examining it in the larger context of his argument:

> For since the Babylonians existed as one nation and they themselves then in those times resolved to rule all [nations], he correctly names them as a lioness, as a creature of one form. Similarly also the Persians are one sordid nation, which only spoke with the one tongue. On account of this he likened them also to a bear. Likewise also the Greeks he said were a leopard. For they all existed as Greeks. But now the powerful beast is not one nation, but it is of many tongues (γλωσσῶν) and it gathers to itself from many races (γένους) of men and prepares an army in a line of battle, and all are called Romans, though all are not from one country (χώρας).[118]

For Hippolytus, the distinguishing mark of the kingdom of the Romans is its cultural multivalency (or at least its attempt thereat) characterized by the merging of human beings from different tongues, races, and countries under a single political regime.[119] It is a gathering that relativizes the distinctions between peoples based on language, family, tribal origins, and land, whereas each of the preceding empires maintained a distinct cultural identity despite the extension of their rule over a diversity of nations.

Of particular importance to Hippolytus is the multilingualism of the fourth beast, which he contrasts with the monolingualism of the preceding empires. Such a feature would have stood out in the mind of early Christians, given the importance of the

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[118] *Comm. Dan.* 4.8.4–7 (Schmidt, 138; GCSNF 7:212). The description of the Persians as a sordid nation likely has reference to their representation on the statue as silver being a baser metal than the gold of the head.

[119] The terms used by Hippolytus were standard synonyms for nationhood within the Greek language. See György Geréby, "The Angels of the Nations: Is a National Christianity Possible?," in *Across the Mediterranean—Along the Nile: Studies in Egyptology, Nubiology and Late Antiquity*, ed. Tamás A. Bács, Ádám Bollók, and Tivadar Vida (Budapest: Archaeolingua, 2018), 2:827.

story of the tower of Babel to the Christian political imagination.[120] In this story, as I briefly discussed in the previous chapter, it is the division of languages by God that becomes the basis for national plurality. Moreover, the multilingualism of the fourth beast highlights its parodic character, given how the division of the nations is portrayed in early Christianity as being reversed in the church through the transcendence of linguistic difference.[121] The contrast between the fourth beast and those that preceded it serves to accentuate the audacity of Rome in seeking to transcend all national differences, assimilating the peoples of the world into a single corporate identity as an alternative to the church.

For Hippolytus, the Roman project is an unprecedented manifestation of Satan's parody of the church. It is from this perspective that he delivers his best-known critique of the Roman Empire by reference to the census of Augustus at the time of Jesus's birth:

> But a certain thought lies within the heart that we shall not leave undescribed, as it is able to aid a soul. For when in the forty-second year of Caesar Augustus the Lord was born, when the kingdom of the Romans flourished, the Lord, through the apostles, summoned all nations and all tongues and made a nation of Christians who believe in the Lord and who carry a new name in [their] heart, in the same manner [this] kingdom which exists now, which rules according to the operation of Satan, counterfeits [the kingdom of Christ]; it likewise collects those who are the most wellborn from all nations and prepares them for war, having called them Romans. And on account of this also the first census happened under Augustus, when the Lord was born in Bethlehem, so that the men of this world, being registered under an earthly king, would be called Romans, but those who believe in the heavenly king would be named Christians, who on [their] forehead carry the victory against death.[122]

The passage draws a number of parallels between the kingdom of God and the

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[120] On this, see György Geréby, "The Nation, the Nations, and the Third Nation: The Political Essence of Early Christianity," in *Theology and World Politics: Metaphysics, Genealogies, Political Theologies*, ed. Vassilios Paipais (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 182–209; and Geréby, "Angels of the Nations," 2:830–32.

[121] See especially the story of Pentecost in Acts 2 and the songs of praise in Rev 5:9–10 and 7:9–10, as well as the examples cited in Geréby in the previous footnote.

[122] *Comm. Dan.* 4.9 (Schmidt, 139; GCSNF 7:214).

kingdom of the Romans to highlight the theme of mimicry. First, there is Hippolytus's use of the title κύριος for both Christ and Augustus, which accentuates competing claims for lordship. Second, there is a universal summons and a gathering into one national identity. As the Lord, through the apostles, summoned all nations and tongues, establishing a third nation, a universal people, even so the kingdom of the Romans, which is ruled according to the machinations of Satan, counterfeits the kingdom by assimilating peoples from all nations.[123] For Hippolytus, this is especially evident in the census ordered by Augustus, which sought to register all of humanity (οἱ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἄνθρωποι) under a single king.[124]

Third, there is the giving of a new name, bespeaking a new identity. The Lord's kingdom is a nation that bears his name, a "nation of Christians" (ἔθνος χριστιανῶν), and those who trust in the Lord are described as carrying a new name in their heart (καινὸν ὄνομα ἐν καρδίᾳ βασταζόντων), being named Christians (χριστιανοὶ ὀνομασθῶσιν) and bearing the trophy against death on their forehead.[125] Parallel to this is the giving of a new name to those called and registered under Augustus as "Romans."

But alongside these parallels, Hippolytus draws a fundamental contrast between the two kingdoms. While the Romans are registered under an *earthly* king, Christians are gathered under a *heavenly* king. As seen in the story of the fiery furnace, the most important distinction between Nebuchadnezzar and Christ is that the former belongs to the earthly domain of perishability and corruptibility, while Christ represents a

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[123] On the church as the third nation, see Geréby, "Nation, the Nations, and Third Nation," 182–209.

[124] For a comparison of Hippolytus's interpretation of the census to that of Origen and Ambrose, see V. Buchheit, "Hippolyt, Origenes und Ambrosius über den Census Augusti," in *Vivarium: Festschrift Theodor Klauser Zum 90. Geburtstag*, ed. Ernst Dassmann, Klaus Thraede, and Theodor Klauser, *JAC* Ergänzungsband 11 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1984).

[125] Such marks upon foreheads have a rich background in the Scriptures, extending back to the marks placed on the foreheads of Israel's priests and subsequently being a means of marking out the righteous before judgment, especially through the ministration of angelic beings (e.g., Ezek 9). This is likely a direct allusion to the marking of the righteous as recorded in Rev 7:1–8.

heavenly king. Even so, the basic distinction between Rome and the kingdom of Christ is between the earthly and the heavenly, as it is for all previous kingdoms as well.

Nevertheless, Rome occupies a unique place within the history of the kingdoms of the world because it represents, for Hippolytus, the ultimate attempt by Satan to mimic the heavenly kingdom of God through an earthly counterfeit. Its parody of the incarnation, of which the census of Augustus is a preliminary manifestation, is a response to the revelation of the Son of God and represents the devil's final desperate effort to seduce humanity through political idolatry, with its inevitable failure marking the consummation of the world and the passing from earthly things to heavenly things. Hippolytus states,

> For the three beasts have already passed away and have ceased, just as was shown above, and while one [beast] is yet beginning to culminate, if this [beast] also is removed, earthly things shall cease, but heavenly things shall begin, so that the perpetual and eternal kingdom of the saints may be shown and the heavenly kingdom may be clearly displayed to all, neither through a form as seen on the mountain of Sinai, nor in a pillar of cloud as revealed on a mountain peak, but with armies and battalions of angels, and as incarnate God and man, Son of God and of Man (ἔνσαρκος δὲ θεὸς καὶ ἄνθρωπος, υἱὸς θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπου) the judge who is coming from the heavens into the world.[126]

For Hippolytus, it is the removal of the fourth beast that will give way to the universal revelation of the kingdom of God in the incarnate Word, the Son of God and Son of Man, Jesus Christ.

But how can this timeline be reconciled with what has been said previously about Rome's devolution into anarchy and its division into ten kingdoms, followed by the kingdom of the antichrist? The answer is that Hippolytus does not regard the devolution of the empire into anarchy as its termination but as a period of decline and rejuvenation. As the quote above makes clear, Hippolytus understands the Roman Empire to be in a nascent phase of its zenith, which will be followed by its decline into anarchy. But this

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[126] *Comm. Dan.* 4.10.2 (Schmidt, 139–40; GCSNF 7:216).

will not mark the end of the empire. For Hippolytus, building on the Revelation of John, Satan's greatest act of parody will be the resurrection of the empire through the power of his son, the antichrist.[127] To consider this dimension of Hippolytus's eschatology, it is necessary to turn to his treatise *On the Antichrist*, in which he narrates the events that will unfold in the last days.

The Death and Resurrection of the Roman Empire as Satanic Parody

Hippolytus begins the main body of his treatise *On the Antichrist* by highlighting the antichrist's mimicry of the kingship of Christ, noting how the deceiver seeks to imitate the Son of God in all things.[128] Like Christ, the antichrist has been prophesied under the figure of a lion, which speaks to the royalty and glory of Christ and the antichrist's imitation of these qualities.[129] This mimicry extends to other prophetic images and descriptions as well. As Christ was manifested as a lamb, so will the antichrist, though he is a wolf in sheep's clothing. As Christ was of the circumcision, so the antichrist will be. As Christ sent out apostles among the nations, so will the antichrist commission false apostles (ψευδαποστόλους). As Christ gathered sheep that were scattered, so will the antichrist gather the scattered people of the Jews. As Christ will seal those who believe in him, so will the antichrist give a seal. As Christ appeared in the form of a man, so will the antichrist come in the form of a man ("ἐν σχήματι ἀνθρώπου ἐφάνη ὁ χύριος, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν σχήματι ἀνθρώπου ἐλεύσεται"). And just as "the Savior raised up and showed his holy flesh like a temple," so will the antichrist "raise a temple of stone in Jerusalem" (ἀνέστησεν ὁ σωτὴρ καὶ ἀπέδειξε τὴν ἁγίαν σάρκα αὐτοῦ ὡς ναόν, καὶ αὐτὸς

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[127] Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 61.

[128] *Antichr.* 6 (GCS 1.2.8).

[129] *Antichr.* 6 (GCS 1.2.8).

ἀναστήσει τὸν ἐν Ἰεροσολύμοις λίθινον ναόν). In light of this, Hippolytus explains that the aim of his treatise is to expose the "seductive arts" (πλάνα τεχνάσματα) of the antichrist for the sake of his hearers through his reading of the Scriptures.

In what immediately follows, Hippolytus uses the blessings of Judah and Dan in Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33 to continue his demonstration of how the Scriptures have anticipated Satan's presentation of the antichrist as a false image of God.[130] After discussing the christological meaning of the blessings of Judah, he turns to the prophecies concerning Dan to demonstrate how they signal the coming of the antichrist. His integration of Jacob's and Moses's prophecies concerning Dan serves to establish the primordial identity of the one revealed in the eschatological figure.[131] The blessing of Moses identifies the principle of mimicry as it describes Dan, like Judah, as a lion's whelp.[132] But, lest anyone assume this to be a reference to Christ, Hippolytus's cites Jacob's description of Dan as evidence that it is the antichrist who is the subject of the Danielic prophecies. "And that the case stands thus, we see also from the words of Jacob: 'Let Dan be a serpent, lying upon the ground, biting the horse's heel.' What, then, is meant by the serpent but Antichrist, that deceiver who is mentioned in Genesis, who deceived Eve and supplanted Adam?"[133] While Moses's words prophesy concerning the form that the deceiver would assume through the antichrist in mimicking Jesus, Jacob's prophecy reveal his true identity as the deceiver who assumed the form of a serpent in the garden.

After indicating the way in which Satan will present the antichrist as a false

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[130] *Antichr.* 7–15 (GCS 1.2.8–12).

[131] On the Christian tradition of attributing the lineage of the antichrist to the tribe of Dan, see Charles E. Hill, "Antichrist from the Tribe of Dan," *JTS* 46, no. 1 (1995): 99–117.

[132] *Antichr.* 14 (GCS 1.2.11).

[133] *Antichr.* 14 (GCS 1.2.11).

image of God, Hippolytus turns to the means by which the antichrist will mimic divine power. In explaining the antichrist's work (πρᾶξιν), Hippolytus notes how the antichrist's mimicry was anticipated by the prophet Jeremiah through a parable: "The partridge cried, (and) gathered what he did not hatch, making himself riches without judgment: in the midst of his days they shall leave him, and at his end he shall be a fool."[134] Taking this to be a prophetic reference to the antichrist, Hippolytus, per his usual method, elucidates the image by drawing out a number of correspondences:

> For as the partridge is a vainglorious (κενοδόξου) creature, when it sees near at hand the nest of another partridge with young in it, and with the parent-bird (πατρὸς) away on the wing in quest of food (νομήν), it imitates (μιμούμενος) the cry of the other bird, and calls (προσκαλεῖται) the young to itself; and they, taking it to be their own parent, run to it. And it delights itself proudly in the alien pullets (τέκνοις) as in its own. But when the real parent-bird returns, and calls them with its own familiar cry, the young recognize it, and forsake the deceiver (νόθον), and betake themselves to the real parent. This thing, then, the prophet has adopted as a simile (ὁμοιώματι), applying it in a similar manner to Antichrist. For he will allure mankind to himself (προσκαλέσεται πρὸς ἑαθτὸν τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα), wishing to gain possession of those who are not his own, and promising deliverance to all (λύτρωσιν πᾶσι ματαίαν ἐπαγγελλόμενος), while he is unable to save himself.[135]

For Hippolytus, the simile of the partridge demonstrates the antichrist's key strategy in imitating Christ: the gathering of all humanity around himself.[136] The partridge's use of a call to deceive the other bird's chicks is especially conducive to the point Hippolytus desires to make. As I have already shown, Satan's parody of the incarnation involves a calling or summoning of the nations around a single political ruler in imitation of Christ's own calling of the nations. The antichrist represents the ultimate expression of this goal as a parody of the church, the universal body of Christ, through the proclamation of a false gospel.

That the antichrist will do this through a reconstituted Roman Empire is clear

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[134] *Antichr.* 54 (*ANF* 5:207; GCS 1.2.36); cf. Jer 17:11.

[135] *Antichr.* 55 (*ANF* 5:215–16; GCS 1.2.36–37).

[136] Cf. *Antichr.* 54 (GCS 1.2.36).

from his reflections on the meaning of the number of the beast in Revelation. He begins by citing John's vision in Revelation 13 of the second beast that arises from the earth.[137] There, the second beast is described as having two horns, like a lamb, and speaking like a dragon. He is endowed with all the power of the first beast and makes all the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, following the latter's recovery from its mortal wound. The second beast is said to perform great wonders, even calling down fire from heaven in the presence of witnesses, and using miracles to deceive the earth's inhabitants, convincing them to create an image to the first beast. The second beast then breathes life into the image of the beast so that it is able to speak and kill those who refuse to worship it. Finally, he issues a universal command—to "both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond"—that all people should bear a mark on their right hand or forehead, the number of the name of the beast, in order to engage in economic exchange.[138] John provides a clue as to the meaning of the mark by indicating the number, 666, as being the number of a human being.

For Hippolytus, the enigmatic mark of the beast bears special reference to the Roman identity under which the antichrist will seek to subsume all of humanity, as he explains in his subsequent comments. First, he recognizes that the second beast represents the kingship (βασιλείαν) of the antichrist, which within the historical timeline conceived by Hippolytus emerges from the period of anarchy into which Rome had devolved. By the two horns, he understands the figure of the antichrist and his false prophet, by the lamblike quality of the horns he understands the antichrist's mimicry of the kingship of the Son of God (ἐξομοιοῦθαι θέλει τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ), and by the dragon-like speech he

[137] *Antichr.* 48 (GCS 1.2.30–31).

[138] *Antichr.* 48 (*ANF* 5:214; GCS 1.2.31); cf. *Antichr.* 3 (GCS 1.2.5–6), the universal call of the Word as described by Hippolytus.

understands his deception.[139] The power which the antichrist exercises will be the power of the first beast, which Hippolytus identifies as the kingdom of Rome:

> And the words, "he exercised all the power of the first beast before him, and caused the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed," signify that, after the manner of the law of Augustus (Αὐγούστου νόμον), by whom the empire of Rome (βασιλεία Ῥωμαίων) was established (συνέστη), he too will rule and govern (κελεύσει καὶ διατάξει), sanctioning everything (κυρῶν ἅπαντα) by it, and taking greater glory to himself.[140]

The language here indicates that the antichrist will not merely follow the precedent established by Augustus in his manner of rule but that his kingdom represents a reconstituted Roman Empire. The resuscitation of the empire following its apparent mortal wound will be for the antichrist the key element in his mimicry of the crucified and resurrected Son of God. Hippolytus elaborates this point:[141]

> For this is the fourth beast, whose head was wounded and healed again, in its being broken up or even dishonored, and partitioned into four crowns; and he then (Antichrist) shall with knavish skill heal it, as it were, and restore it. For this is what is meant by the prophet when he says, "He will give life unto the image, and the image of the beast will speak." For he will act with vigor again, and prove strong by reason of the laws established by him; and he will cause all those who will not worship the image of the beast to be put to death.[142]

Satan's ultimate act of parody will be to reconstitute a universal body of humanity that had been broken apart. It is this act of uniting what had been separated that Hippolytus understands to be the antichrist's work of creation, so powerfully conveyed in Revelation's description of his breathing of life into the image. As the Son of God reveals the creative power of God by clothing his crucified and risen body in the flesh of the nations, even so the antichrist will seek to mimic the creative power of God through the

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[139] *Antichr.* 49 (GCS 1.2.31).

[140] *Antichr.* 49 (*ANF* 5:214; GCS 1.2.31–32).

[141] As Hippolytus explains in his interpretation of the four beasts from Dan 7, no other earthly kingdom will follow that of the Romans. Thus, the kingdom of the antichrist represents a reconstituted Rome rather than a new kingdom. *Comm. Dan.* 4.5.2–3 (Schmidt, 135; GCSNF 7:204, 206).

[142] *Antichr.* 49 (*ANF* 5:214; GCS 1.2.32).

risen body of the fallen empire.

The theme of universal, collective human identity in the kingdom of the antichrist is extended to Hippolytus's proposal regarding the meaning of the number of the beast. Acknowledging that multiple options are possible, he offers his own suggestion.[143] He explains, "But, as we have already said, the wound of the first beast was healed, and he (the second beast) was to make the image speak, that is to say, he should be powerful; and it is manifest to all that those who at present still hold the power are Latins. If, then, we take the name as the name of a single man, it becomes *Latinus*."[144] While Hippolytus acknowledges that one can only hold this interpretation loosely, the option finds support within his broader reading of political history. First, it aligns with Hippolytus's expose of the Roman Empire in his *Commentary on Daniel*, highlighting the means by which Rome mimics the kingdom of God by gathering all nations and giving them the name of "Romans." Even more so, the singular sense of the name *Latinus* corresponds well to the corporate identity of the church under the single name of Christ. Indeed, Hippolytus, as I have shown, reflects Paul's understanding in defining the new corporate humanity by its participation in the one new man, Jesus Christ. Even so, the number of the beast is presented in Revelation as the name of *a* human being. Like the name of Christ, the singular name bespeaks a figure who presumes to unify all of humanity in himself, just as Rome was said to do so under its name. Thus, the mark of the beast can be understood as a reference to the corporate body of the antichrist as the church is understood as the corporate body of Christ. For Hippolytus, Satan's mimicry of the incarnation is a mimicry of the church, the body of the crucified and resurrected Son of God.

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[143] He cites the specific examples of Titan (Τειτάν) and Evanthas (Εὐάνθας), restating that there are many such others. Hippolytus is indebted to Irenaeus with regard to the specific options he mentions in this section, Irenaeus's favorite option being "Titan." Cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.30.3 (SC 153.378–84).

[144] *Antichr.* 50 (*ANF* 5:215; GCS 1.2.34).

A Summary of Hippolytus's Critique of Empire

In the previous chapters I have demonstrated that, for Hippolytus, the mystery of unity revealed in Christ is of paramount importance because it is through unity that the singular power of the one true God is made known. This unity is manifest not only in the relationship between the beloved Son and the Father but also in the unity of the church, whose members are granted participation in the Son's own relationship with the Father through the incarnation, being renewed in the image of God. This unity is made possible by the love of the Word, who, upon the cross, bound his flesh to himself and, with outstretched arms, extended his embrace to all nations, gathering them into his one body.

Through the church, the divine power of the cross continues to be revealed in the saints who bear faithful witness to Christ, sharing in his sufferings in the flesh so that they may enter into the fullness of his divine life. In this way, they are reformed in Christ as the image and likeness of God. As demonstrated, Hippolytus deeply appreciates the irony of this mystery—life in death, power in weakness, sovereignty in submission—and underlying this paradox is his insistence that Jesus reveals what it means to be God in the way he dies as a human being.

It is within this framework that one must understand Hippolytus's critique of empire. Taking it as the point of reference, several observations can be made about Hippolytus's assessment of imperialism as a parody of the incarnation. First, for Hippolytus, imperialism is ultimately based on a false image of God. Jesus has revealed what it means to be God by revealing what it means to be human, but the failure of kings to reckon with their own humanity betrays a view of divinity that is set apart from, or perhaps even over against, their understanding of what it means to be human. The self-legitimation of empire depends on a dichotomy between divine life and human mortality and divine power and human weakness. Whereas the cross has brought these two together in the revelation of Christ as the image of God, Roman imperial power reflects a vision of divinity understood as a distant supreme being who has transcended the normal

limitations of human existence. The union of seemingly disparate realities like divine strength and human weakness is incomprehensible to the imperialistic mindset.

Second, this false image of divinity fundamentally distorts the imperial understanding of divine power. Whereas Christ is revealed as the very power of God through his humble submission and perfect obedience to the Father, establishing the paradigm for the church's own manifestation of divine power through human weakness, empire envisions divine power in terms of autonomy and domination. The failure of emperors to recognize the unique and superior power of God revealed in the cross and, by extension the church, serves to corrupt and distort the legitimate power they have been granted within the divine economy during the present age.

For Hippolytus, the power of earthly political rule is premised on violence. As I have noted above, this does not inherently illegitimize the authority of governing authorities. God has ordained that rulers bear the sword in the present age as a way of restraining evil and encouraging good. The attempt, however, to appropriate this limited, temporal prerogative for the purpose of imperial ambition represents a gross abuse of the authority the state has received from God. For Hippolytus, imperialism is premised not merely on the use of the sword but the abuse of it. In other words, the misuse of violence is constitutive of the power of empire.

Third, this misappropriation of divine power reveals the false unity of the empire. As I have noted in his comments on the census under Augustus, Hippolytus identifies violence as the fundamental basis for Rome's imperial unity. Its multivalent identity is the result of a gathering of disparate nations reconstituted specifically as an *army* of Romans. The ambition of Rome, far from being content with the establishment of intranational order, seeks to usher in a universal peace through military might and conquest. The extension of the name of "Romans" to conquered peoples does not represent, for Hippolytus, an act of imperial beneficence but ambition and pretension.

Fourth, for Hippolytus, the unity that imperialism establishes through violence

is premised on a perversion of judgment, since it is violence against the church, in particular, that accomplishes the imperial unification of the nations. In his comments on the story of Susannah, for example, Hippolytus's identification of the two wicked elders as representatives of the Jews and Gentiles of his own time prompts him to highlight the irony of their collaboration. On the surface, it seems that the two communities would find it difficult to work together toward a common goal. But Hippolytus argues that the differences between the two are superficial, and that their mutual animosity reveals a much deeper commonality. Thus, when the Scriptures describe the elders going their separate ways from the garden under the pretense of the noon time meal, their return to the same place to observe Susannah indicates that while unbelieving Jews and Gentiles are not in harmony (οὐ συμφωνοῦσιν) with regard to earthly foods, they do "come together and agree" (συνερχόμενοι κοινωνοῦσιν) in "opinions" (θεωρίαις) and in "every worldly matter" (παντὶ πράγματι κοσμικῷ).[145] For Hippolytus, it is the presence of the universal body of Christ that brings the nations together in violence in a great parody of the incarnation as they "scheme against the church."[146] The division between Jew and Gentile is seemingly overcome through their mutual hatred of the church and desire for her destruction, wrought through the working of Satan in them, in spite of their differences.[147]

The fullness of this idolatrous collaboration, however, awaits the advent of the antichrist. Central to this figure's work will be the gathering of the Jews from the dispersion, promising them the restoration of their kingdom and nation and becoming for them a father and the object of their worship, while at the same time gathering all of

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[145] *Comm. Dan.* 1.16.5 (Schmidt, 44; GCSNF 7:38). As Schmidt notes, θεωρίαις could refer concretely to the spectacles in which Christians would be thrown to the lions (Schmidt, 44n76).

[146] *Comm. Dan.* 1.15.6 (Schmidt, 43; GCSNF 7:36); cf. *Comm. Dan.* 1.30.1.

[147] *Comm. Dan.* 1.16.4 (Schmidt, 44; GCSNF 7:38).

humanity to himself.[148] As Hippolytus goes on to explain, however, the antichrist will not have to force himself upon his people but will gather them in response to their request for him to persecute the saints.[149] For Hippolytus, the gathering of unbelievers from the nations and the persecution of the saints are complementary elements of the same project. It is mutual hatred of the saints that brings the nations together under the power of the son of the devil. Whereas the body of Christ is bound together by the Word's love for his flesh, the body of the antichrist is bound together by hatred. Hippolytus emphasizes this contrast in his appeal to a prophecy from Jeremiah 8:16 and an unknown source, noting how the scriptural imagery of driven horses will be fulfilled in the antichrist's gathering of the nations for war, the sword being extended to any who oppose him; whereas Hippolytus understands the depiction of Christ as a charioteer in the Song of Songs to be fulfilled in the church's apostolic preaching of the gospel of peace (see chapter 4 of this dissertation).[150]

The final observation I wish to make about Hippolytus's assessment of empire regards the outcome of empire's unity through violence. As I have observed in the previous chapter, Hippolytus understands the cross as an instrument of creation, a revelation of God's power as Creator, through which humanity is renewed in his image and conformed to his likeness in Christ. What, then, is the outcome of the imperial effort to mimic divine power? For Hippolytus, the abuse of the state's legitimate power in its imperialistic ambition to mimic divinity serves to achieve the opposite effect of the incarnation. Instead of restoring humanity to the image and likeness of God, it debases humanity, treating human beings like animals rather than image bearers of God. Several examples will serve to highlight this theme in Hippolytus's assessment of empire.

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[148] *Antichr.* 54–55 (GCS 1.2.36–37).

[149] *Antichr.* 56 (GCS 1.2.37).

[150] *Antichr.* 15 (GCS 1.2.12).

In his comments on the story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation in Daniel 2, Hippolytus notes the title given to Arioch, with whom Daniel consults after hearing about the king's command to have all the wise men killed. For Hippolytus, the title, which he mistranslates as "Chief-Butcher," indicates the distinctive character of earthly political rule.[151] "For Scripture has said that the ruler of the sword is the Chief-Butcher. For even as a butcher kills all creatures and butchers them, in the same way also the rulers of this world kill men, butchering them as unreasoning animals."[152] The text's (in Hippolytus's rendering) use of the term "Chief-Butcher" to identify the bearer of the sword acknowledges the widespread abuse to which this authority is prone. In particular, Hippolytus understands this title to indicate the manner in which violence is used indiscriminately by governing authorities in ways that fail to appreciate the dignity of human beings, rendering them of no more value than the unreasoning animals slaughtered by a butcher. The sword, which has been ordained by God for the good of humanity, is instead turned against humanity through the perversion of political authority.

For Hippolytus, this idolatrous perversion of power comes at no less than the cost of one's humanity. This applies both to rulers and to those they rule. In the case of rulers, the manipulation of Satan not only fails to achieve for them divine glory but it does so by corrupting their humanity by turning them into tyrants, which for Hippolytus is what human kingship becomes when it strives for divine likeness through any other means than the cross of Christ.

Throughout his writings he describes Satan as a tyrant and describes how rulers controlled by him take on his character, particularly through their perversion of justice. He identifies Nebuchadnezzar as a "tyrannical human king" (ἀνθρώπου βασιλέως

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[151] As Schmidt notes, the word translated as "chief cook" actually referred to a chief of soldiers or guards, but to a Greek speaker it sounded like the title for a person in charge of cooking. *Comm. Dan.* (Schmidt, 65n190).

[152] *Comm. Dan.* 2.4.2 (Schmidt, 65; GCSNF 7:74).

τυραννοῦντος).[153] He interpolates a conversation among Daniel's companions in which they describe Nebuchadnezzar in the same way: "For behold, it has come! Even our entire race has been taken captive and has become enslaved to the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar, like a great devil (μέγας διάβολος), tyrannizes (τυραννεῖ) against us and, having made a golden image, compels [us] to idolatry."[154] Likewise, Hippolytus repeatedly identifies the antichrist in the same way, referring to him as "that tyrant and king, that dread judge, that son of the devil" or "that tyrant, and shameless one, and adversary of God."[155]

For Hippolytus, the consequence—indeed the satanic goal—of unity through violence, premised on a distorted vision of divine power, is the debasement and destruction of the human image of God. Hippolytus's perspective profoundly appreciates the book of Daniel's presentation of the historical succession of empires, which appear as beasts, as a "progressive degeneration or bestialisation of human rule" while presenting the deliverance of Israel as the "vindication of humanity against bestiality."[156]

Tyrants not only debase themselves, however, but those they rule. As already noted, Hippolytus understands the human proclivity to pervert the use of the sword as a failure to discern the difference between the unique dignity of human beings within the created order, turning the exercise of political judgment into butchery. Hippolytus returns to this theme in his comments on Nebuchadnezzar's second dream. He notes how the wild animals who are said to dwell under the tree, which symbolizes Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, are identified as the "soldiers and the armies which always stand near and are faithful to the king, obeying what has been ordered, like wild beasts who are ready to

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[153] *Comm. Dan.* 2.17.1 (Schmidt, 74; GCSNF 7:94).

[154] *Comm. Dan.* 2.19.3 (Schmidt, 76; GCSNF 7:96).

[155] *Antichr.* 15 (*ANF* 5:207; GCS 1.2.11); see also *Antichr.* 25, 43, 61 (GCS 1.2.18, 27, 42).

[156] O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, 71, 87.

battle and to destroy and to rend men (ἀνθρώπους) in pieces as beasts do."[157] In following the king in his perversion of violence through injustice, the subjects of the king are conformed to his image, becoming like animals. In effect, the king's denial of his own humanity, premised on a false idea of what it means to be divine, produces a political context in which those who do not share the earthly power of the king are regarded as less than human. In the imperial effort to become like God by transcending what makes one human, the dignity of the human being as the image of God is denied.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined Hippolytus's critique of empire through the lens of his understanding of God's image and power. By first surveying Roman imperial ideology, I have shown how Hippolytus's theology directly challenged Roman imperial propaganda, which portrayed emperors as divine images of power on account of their unification of the nations under their single rule. Situating his critique within the broader context of early Christian responses to imperialism, I have demonstrated that Hippolytus is not an outlier, since even the most ostensibly conservative Christian positions undermined emperors' claims to divine status, demoting earthly rulers to a place far beneath what they sought for themselves.

At the heart of Hippolytus's critique lies his understanding of divine power and its manifestation in the church. While earthly rulers have a legitimate role in the divine economy—even functioning, in a limited sense, as images of the heavenly king—their assumption of divine prerogatives constitutes a central strategy of Satan, who seeks to deceive humanity once again by crafting a false image of divinity. Ironically, this illusory power can only sustain itself through the dehumanization of both ruler and ruled, perpetuating a cycle of tyranny and violence in the name of cosmic and social order.

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[157] *Comm. Dan.* 3.8.9 (Schmidt, 107; GCSNF 7:152).

Thus, rather than reflecting the image of God, empire becomes a distorted image of the devil. Hippolytus's unmasking of the satanic nature of empire reminds believers that it is only through participation in the self-offering of the Son that human beings fully realize their creation in the image and likeness of God.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this study I have argued that Hippolytus's apocalyptic vision of Christ as the image of God profoundly shaped his political imagination, leading him to envision church and empire as rival images of divine power. Hippolytus's vision reflects a rich theological anthropology: humanity, created in the image of God, stands at the center of God's plan to unite heaven and earth under the single lordship of his human image as the revelation of his own sovereign power. Hippolytus's recognition of the cross as the climactic apocalypse of divine power reshaped his understanding of power, as God paradoxically reveals his sovereignty through human weakness. In his death on the cross, Christ unveils the ultimate paradigm of divine power as he becomes the source of humanity's participation in God's completion of his creation. Through the cross, believers are called to join their own bodies to Christ's self-offering, embracing death as the only path to true likeness with God, a transformation made possible by the Spirit's power poured out on the cross. Empire, however, cannot tolerate human mortality, seeking a form of divine likeness that refuses to reckon with the scandal of the cross. Yet, in attempting to mimic divine power apart from the cross, empire does not produce but debases the image of God, ultimately subjecting humanity to the tyranny of Satan.

Summary

In the preceding chapters I have explored this area of Hippolytus's thought in several steps. My study began with a reconsideration of Hippolytus's scriptural interpretation. While previous scholarship has illuminated key aspects of his typological exegesis, I argued that contemporary distinctions between typology and allegory have

obscured important elements of his thought. In response, I proposed that the apocalyptic reading of Scripture offers a better framework for understanding his exegesis. His approach reflects an apocalyptic vision of creation itself, where the earthly serves as a mirror of the heavenly. At the center of this vision is Christ, the visible revelation of the heavenly, in whom all scriptural types and images find their coherence and fulfillment. Hippolytus's interpretation of Scripture, therefore, is most fundamentally retroactive, beginning with Christ and reading backwards to understand how the Scriptures testify to him.

Yet for Hippolytus, scriptural interpretation is not merely an exegetical exercise; it is a means of participation in the divine economy revealed within it. Both the delivery and interpretation of the sacred writings depend on the Holy Spirit, through whom the Son bears witness to himself as the fulfillment of the Father's plan. Only those who share in the Spirit can perceive Christ's testimony to himself in the law and the prophets. The distinction between those inspired by the Spirit and those who remain blind in the flesh plays a crucial role in Hippolytus's understanding of church and empire.

Having established this alternative framework for Hippolytus's interpretation of Scripture, I then examined his understanding of the mystery of the economy revealed within it. By tracing his argument in *Against Noetus*, I explored Hippolytus's understanding of the incarnation and its central place in his theology. I began by reassessing various interpretations of his argument, rejecting the tendency to align him with the "Logos theology" of the apologists over and against figures like Irenaeus. Instead, I argued that his Christology is best understood as continuous with Irenaeus's emphasis on the incarnate Word as the starting point for theology—a perspective reinforced by my earlier analysis of Hippolytus's hermeneutic.

Hippolytus's core conviction is that Jesus reveals what it means to be God by revealing what it means to be human. As *Against Noetus* establishes the unity of God while maintaining the Word of the Father as the subject of the incarnation, its argument

reveals a profound theological anthropology: the human being is the image of God, and Christ, as the perfect human, is revealed as the Word of the Father according to the testimony of the Spirit in the Scriptures. This conviction profoundly shapes Hippolytus's understanding of divine unity—not as the conflation of Father and Word but as a unity of power. The Scriptures reveal this unity most fully through the Son's obedience to the Father in the power of the Spirit. The climactic moment of this revelation, for Hippolytus, is the cross, which he describes in the closing words of *Against Noetus* as the radiant manifestation of the Creator.

Building on this foundation, chapter 4 began by examining the centrality of the cross within Hippolytus's theology of the divine unity of power. I argued that the cross, for Hippolytus, is the definitive revelation of divine power because it is the climactic moment of God's creation of his human image, whose union of heaven and earth in his own body represents the goal and fulfillment of creation. As the instrument of cosmic unity, the cross is also the means by which God is uniting all nations in the universal body of his Son, the church.

The remainder of the chapter, therefore, explored Hippolytus's understanding of the church through the lens of the cross. I argued that the church is defined by its participation in Christ. In being joined to the crucified body of the Son, the saints share in his divine power according to the Spirit. Hippolytus employs Edenic imagery to illustrate this reality, identifying the church as the heavenly garden where the faithful, planted in the incorruptible flesh of Christ, grow into the fullness of his perfect humanity. This synergetic relationship between Christ and the church means that the incarnation extends into the life of the church. Through the preaching of the gospel, the Word descends to gather the nations around his body, so that believers might ascend with him by participating in his self-offering through martyrdom. By recapitulating within itself the reality of the cross, the church embodies an image of divine power radically redefined by the cross through the Spirit-empowered witness of the saints.

The final chapter mirrored the structure of the previous one, beginning with a summary of Roman imperial ideology. I highlighted the interplay of Hellenistic notions of the divinity of king and the Roman imperial appropriation of Stoic eschatology, which shaped the vision of imperial rule as an image of divine power through unity. By the time of Hippolytus, the revival of emperor worship under Septimius Severus further reinforced the idea of the emperor as the embodiment of divine unity, legitimized through military power and universal rule.

While early Christian responses to imperialism varied, none accepted the divine claims made by or for emperors. Hippolytus was no exception. While granting legitimacy to earthly political rule in the present age, even acknowledging kings as earthly types of the heavenly king, Hippolytus condemns the imperial ambition to unite all nations under a single earthly ruler as a satanic parody of the church. He unmasks the propensity of earthly kings to reject their status as mortal creatures as the work of the devil. By raising the images of kings as centers of universal, collective identity, Satan aims to seduce humanity a second time by offering a parody of the divine image and likeness revealed in Christ.

For Hippolytus, the Roman Empire is the most fully realized expression of this satanic parody of the incarnation. Unlike previous empires, Rome's unique ability to unite diverse peoples under a single identity makes it an unprecedented mimicry of divine power. For Hippolytus, the Roman Empire is Satan's special project, his direct response to the image of divine power revealed in the church. However, the fulfillment of this parody lies in the future, with the coming of the antichrist—the son of the devil—who will revive the wounded body of the Roman Empire in a final, blasphemous imitation of the crucified and resurrected Son of God.

While Hippolytus's vision of empire as a parody of the incarnation is inspired by the Revelation of John, his adaptation accentuates the role of military expansion and violence in the imperial project. This emphasis enables him to expose the tragic irony of

empire: though it promises human flourishing by presenting the emperor as the image of divine power, it ultimately degrades humanity, sustaining its fragile unity through violence and domination. For Hippolytus, this is because empire is built upon a false image of divine power—one that distorts humanity's role within the divine economy. Whereas the cross reveals the power of God through human weakness, empire, in its refusal to acknowledge its own frailty, constructs a counterfeit vision of divinity that bestializes humanity under the tyranny of the devil.

Applications and Further Research

The primary concern of this study has been to explore Hippolytus's view of church and empire within the context of his theology. The approach has been to understand this area of his thought by demonstrating how it coheres within his larger theological vision. While the project primarily has been placed into conversation with studies of Hippolytus's exegesis and theology, it also bears implications and suggests additional avenues of research for the study of early Christian political theology more broadly.

Hippolytan Studies

First, my proposal for the apocalyptic reading of Scripture as a better framework for understanding Hippolytus's exegesis invites further exploration of the benefits (and potential weaknesses) of this perspective. If a better grasp of his retrospective, dialogical reading of Scripture as a means of participation in the divine economy has illuminated key areas of his thought, the application of an apocalyptic framework holds promise for other areas of his theology.

Second, my application of this framework to Hippolytus's argument in *Against Noetus* has highlighted his continuity with figures like Irenaeus in identifying Christ as the starting point for theology. My examination of the Christology of *Against Noetus*, as well as Hippolytus's other writings, in no way exhausts the fine details and complexities

of his Christology, thus inviting further examination of the cogency of this Christocentric reading of Hippolytus's theology.

Additionally, this study has hopefully illustrated the benefit of bringing different facets of Hippolytus's theological vision into conversation, revealing the mutual implication of his Christology, anthropology, ecclesiology, etc. Now that a consensus regarding the Hippolytan corpus has been widely embraced, there is an opportunity to further elucidate the internal coherence of his thought, bringing further clarity to his theological vision as a whole and in its various facets.

Early Christian Political Theology

Studies of early Christian political theology have often turned to concepts of divinity to examine early Christian convictions regarding the state. This study, however, has highlighted the importance of considering early Christian understandings of what it means to be human—particularly the belief that the human being is the image of God—and how this conviction informs political thought. Central to this exploration is the radical nature of the cross as divine self-revelation. As I have argued, this understanding profoundly shaped Hippolytus's conception of political idolatry and, conversely, legitimate political rule. Moreover, it has illuminated the ecclesiocentric nature of Hippolytus's political vision, demonstrating that his view of empire is inextricable from his understanding of the church. In doing so, this study underscores the value of engaging the approach of this study in dialogue with other early Christian figures and the broader tradition of early Christian political thought.

Methodologically, this study has also demonstrated the importance of careful attention to early Christian exegesis and its formative role in shaping the early Christian political imagination. It has shown how an apocalyptic vision of the world, privileging the iconic nature of creation, gave rise to a symbolic worldview in which the political occupies a central place. This apocalyptic framework offers a fruitful lens for further

exploring the theological and political visions of other early Christian writers and the broader trajectory of early Christian political thought.

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ABSTRACT

CHURCH AND EMPIRE IN THE THEOLOGY
OF HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME

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In this study, I explore Hippolytus of Rome's views on church and empire within the context of his theology. My central thesis is that Hippolytus's apocalyptic vision of Christ as the image of God profoundly shaped his political imagination, leading him to envision church and empire as rival images of divine power. I begin by addressing questions surrounding Hippolytus's identity and writings and then propose a different framework for understanding his interpretation of Scripture than that which has been customarily used. I argue that Hippolytus reflects an apocalyptic reading of the Scriptures that understands Jesus Christ as the mystery of the divine economy disclosed in them. I then demonstrate how his reading of Scripture profoundly shapes his understanding of Christ as the perfect image of God whose passion on the cross represents the definitive revelation of divine power. Moving to Hippolytus's understanding of the church, I demonstrate how the church's existence, predicated on its participation in the cross, constitutes the church as the universal body of Christ whose unity in suffering represents the extension of the revelation of God's power as the sovereign Creator. Hippolytus, on the other hand, regards the imperial ambition to unite all nations under a single earthly ruler as a satanic parody of the church that is premised on a false image of divine power that debases humanity rather than restoring them to the image of their Creator.

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