

THE PROBLEM OF HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME: A STUDY IN HISTORICAL-CRITICAL RECONSTRUCTION

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The middle of the twentieth century witnessed a major debate in the world of patristic scholarship in regard to the life and literary activity of Hippolytus of Rome. This article will present a survey of that debate, not only because of the significance of the discussion *per se* but also because of its significance for the task of Biblical apologetics. It will be useful for our purposes to trace first the major points in the traditional reconstruction of Hippolytus' life, after which we will examine the radical challenge to this view raised by Pierre Nautin.

I. THE TRADITIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

Of the major figures of the early Church perhaps none presents any greater puzzles for the historian than Hippolytus. Though he was in his own day an esteemed and prolific writer, the facts of his life as well as many of his theological works were quickly forgotten, particularly in the West. The crucial problem for all modern reconstructions of his life is the lack of any known reference to him in the writings of his contemporaries. As a result, the data supplied by the later fathers and by the martyrologies is relatively sparse and sometimes contradictory. The various lines of evidence may be subsumed under three heads.

1. *Patristic Testimony.* Eusebius is the first author to mention Hippolytus, whom he describes as a bishop of an unknown church and one of the many earned churchmen of the early third century.¹ We are supplied with a partial listing of his works:

At that very time also, Hippolytus, besides very many other memoirs, composed the treatise *On Easter*, in which he sets forth a register of the times and puts forward a certain canon of a sixteen-year cycle for Easter, determining the times relative to the first year of the Emperor Alexander. Of his other treatises the following have reached us: *On the Hexaemeron*; *On What Followed the Hexaemeron*; *Against Marcion*; *On the Song*; *On the Parts of Ezekiel*; *On Easter*; *Against All the Heresies*; and very many others also might be found preserved by many people.²

The list of works given by Eusebius is supplemented by Jerome who, in addition to those cited by his predecessor, mentions twelve other treatises: *On Genesis*; *On Zechariah*; *On the Psalms*; *On Isaiah*; *On Daniel*; *On the Apocalypse*; *On Proverbs*; *On Ecclesiastes*; *On Saul and Pythonissa*; *On the Antichrist*; *On the*

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¹Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 6.20. A comprehensive presentation of all the evidence, patristic and medieval, may be found in J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Part I: S. Clement of Rome* (London/New York: Macmillan, 1890), 2. 318-365; A. Harnack, *Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius* (2d ed.; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1893-97), 1. 610-619.

²Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 6.22.

*Resurrection; On the Praise of our Lord and Savior.*³ In the ninth century the patriarch Photius specifies as works of Hippolytus an *Exegesis of Daniel*; a treatise *On Christ and Antichrist*; and a *Syntagma Against Thirty-two Heresies*.⁴ Ebed-Jesu, a Syriac writer of the fourteenth century, supplies several other additions: *A Book Concerning the Incarnation; Exegesis of the Young Daniel and [the History] of Susanna; Chapters Against Gaius; and An Apology Concerning the Apocalypse and the Gospel of John the Apostle and the Evangelist.*⁵

In regard to the identity of Hippolytus the testimony of the fathers diverges widely. As noted above, Eusebius makes him a bishop but claims no knowledge of the church over which he presided. Jerome, dependent as he is upon Eusebius, knows that Hippolytus was a bishop, but he too is ignorant of the locality: "The name of the city I have not been able to learn."⁶ Other writers continue the silence on the particular see but ascribe to Hippolytus the double title of "bishop and martyr."⁷ On the other hand, several traditions developed linking Hippolytus to specific places. He is placed at Rome by Apollinaris, Eustratius of Constantinople, and Leontius of Byzantium.⁸ According to Pope Gelasius our author was "bishop and martyr" in the metropolis of Arabia,⁹ and with the *Chronicon Paschale* begins yet another tradition which makes Hippolytus the bishop not of Rome but of the city of Porto near Rome.¹⁰

A more bewildering array of data may be obtained from the hagiographic documents of the East and West. In an examination of the Church calendar according to the different martyrologies we meet twenty-three occurrences of the name "Hippolytus."¹¹ At times he appears as a bishop (often of Rome or Porto). At other times he is represented as an adherent of the schism of Novatian, later restored to the service of the Catholic Church as a deacon and priest. Again, the circumstances of his martyrdom are variously reported. Not only Rome and Porto but also Alexandria, Antioch and Spain are claimed as the place of martyrdom, and the date is fixed from as early as the reign of Alexander Severus (222-235) to as late as that of Claudius II (268-270).¹² The situation is complicated by the fact

³Jerome *De vir. ill.* 61. Jerome supplies *In Exodum* in place of the *Eis ta meta tēn Hexaēmeron* of Eusebius and omits the mention of *Eis merē tou Iezekiēl*.

⁴Photius *Biblioth.* 202, 121.

⁵Ebed-Jesu *Catal.* 7.

⁶Jerome *De vir. ill.* 61.

⁷E.g., Theodoret *Dial.* 1 *et passim*; Photius *Biblioth.* 202; Ebed-Jesu *Catal.* 7.

⁸Lightfoot, *Fathers*, 2. 431-432.

⁹*Ibid.*, 2. 340.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 2. 344.

¹¹V. Palachkovsky, "La tradition hagiographique sur s. Hippolyte," *Studia Patristica* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 3. 97-107.

¹²*Ibid.*; cf. J. M. Hanssens, *La liturgie d'Hippolyte* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1959) 319-340.

that the hagiographic tradition has been influenced by the account of the death of the classical Hippolytus mentioned in the *Phaedra* of Euripides.¹³ In addition there appears to have been more than one individual bearing this name in the early Church.¹⁴ If history had not bequeathed further evidence, the mystery would have been impenetrable.

2. *The Statue of Hippolytus.* In 1551 in the Ager Veranus near the Tiburtine Way was discovered a mutilated statue of a seated figure. It represents an ecclesiastic, a teacher, and probably a bishop (as the chair would suggest).¹⁵ There is no name to identify the figure, but the sides of the chair are inscribed with an Easter canon and the back supplies a list of theological works. The canon is based on a sixteen-year cycle and calculates the date of Easter over a 112-year period beginning with the first year of the reign of Alexander Severus (222).¹⁶

It is generally accepted that this statue represents Hippolytus and that it testifies to his veneration by a group of followers in the early part of the third century. The grounds for this identification are threefold. (1) The statue was found in the ruins of a sanctuary that stood above the catacombs where, according to hagiographic tradition, Hippolytus the martyr had been buried and in later years venerated.¹⁷ (2) The statue is inscribed with two tables for the calculation of the date of Easter. The structure of the tables shows a striking concordance with the notice of Eusebius regarding Hippolytus.¹⁸ (3) The list of works on the back of the statue shows a substantial number of agreements or near-agreements with the works attributed to Hippolytus by the fathers.¹⁹

The evidence of the statue, in conjunction with the data previously given, is such as to lead us to see Hippolytus as a prolific theological writer of the early third century. He was a man of some obvious importance and probably occupied a significant ecclesiastical position. The discovery of the statue in Rome suggests that this may have been the arena for his activities.

3. *The Elenchos.* The discovery of a relatively complete text of this treatise

¹³R. Reutterer, "Legendstudien um den heiligen Hippolytos," *ZKT* 95 (1973) 288-289.

¹⁴Lightfoot (*Fathers*, 2. 370-377) distinguishes four separate figures: (1) Saint Hippolytus, bishop, writer and martyr, buried near the Tiburtine Way; (2) Hippolytus the martyr of Antioch; (3) Hippolytus the Alexandrian connected with Dionysius; and (4) Hippolytus the Greek captain of brigands, martyred with Eusebius and buried near the Appian Way. Palachkovsky ("La tradition" 107) allows only the historicity of the two Romans of the Tiburtine and Appian Ways.

¹⁵Lightfoot, *Fathers*, 2. 440.

¹⁶Useful discussions of the history and interpretation of the statue may be found in the article by H. Leclercq, "Hippolyte (statue et cimetière de saint)," *DACL* 6/2 (1924) 2419-2483 and in Hanssens, *La liturgie* 217-244.

¹⁷The citations are given by B. Capelle, "Hippolyte de Rome," *RTAM* 17 (1950) 150-151.

¹⁸H. Elfers, "Neue Untersuchungen über die Kirchenordnung Hippolyts von Rom," *Abhandlungen über Theologie und Kirche: Festschrift für Karl Adam* (ed. M. Reding; Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1952) 195.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 192-197; H. Achelis, *Hippolytstudien* (TU n.f. 1/4; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1897) 3-8.

(also known as the *Refutation of All Heresies*) in the middle of the nineteenth century²⁰ has provided the single most important source about the life of Hippolytus. The work itself is anonymous, and numerous candidates have been proposed as its author: Origen, Gaius, Tertullian, Novatian and Hippolytus.²¹ Of these possibilities it is the last that has most generally commended itself to scholars as the proper source for the *Elenchos*.

The particular significance of this polemical treatise lies in the autobiographical details given by the author. In Book IX he presents himself as the champion of Trinitarian orthodoxy and the moral integrity of the Church and the active opponent of popes Zephyrinus (198-217) and Callistus (217-222), whom he regards as Monarchian in theology and lax in discipline. If we may accept, at least tentatively, Hippolytean authorship of the *Refutation*, then we have solid grounds for placing our author in Rome at the beginning of the third century. Further, he lays claim to being a member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, a doctor and, very probably, a bishop of the Church.²²

It is this determined opposition to the lawful bishops of Rome that has become the key to the modern reconstructions of the life of Hippolytus. Although virtually nothing is known of his origins (except that he was probably a student of Irenaeus),²³ it is clear that in the beginning of the third century he was a great luminary in the Roman Church. Such was his fame that Origen came to hear him preach while on a visit to Rome in 212.²⁴ The running battle with Zephyrinus and Callistus is thought to have led him eventually into open schism in which Hippolytus established himself at the head of his own group of disciples. The schism apparently continued during the pontificates of Urbanus and Pontianus. In the year 236 Pontianus and Hippolytus were both arrested in the persecution under the emperor Maximin and deported to the mines in Sardinia.²⁵ Probably both men met their death in exile. This association with Pontianus in exile and martyrdom, along with the tradition of his reconciliation to the Catholic Church late in his life, was enough to restore Hippolytus to the esteem of the faithful and secure for him the title of "saint."

II. THE THESIS OF NAUTIN

In 1947 the prevailing view of the life of Hippolytus received a major challenge

²⁰The first of the ten books that make up the treatise had been known since 1701 (as a work of Origen). In 1842 Minas Minoides discovered on Mount Athos a manuscript of Books IV-X of the same work. The first edition was published in 1851 by E. Miller.

²¹See the introduction of A. D'Alès, *La Théologie de Saint Hippolyte* (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1906) XXXV-XLIII.

²²*Hōn hēmeis diadokoi tynchanontes tēs te autēs charitos metechontes archierateias te kai didaskalias kai phrouroi tēs ekklēsiās lelogismenoi. . . . Elenchos* 1. Introduction. 6 (GCS; ed. Wendland, p. 3). The term *archierateia* is generally interpreted as a reference to the office of the bishop—e.g. *LPGL* 237.

²³Photius *Biblioth.* 121; see the excursus in Lightfoot, *Fathers*, 2. 422-423.

²⁴Jerome *De vir. ill.* 61.

²⁵*Catal. liberian.* Cited in Harnack, *Altchristlichen Literatur*, 1. 610.

in the brief but well-written dissertation of Pierre Nautin, *Hippolyte et Josipe*. In this work the author expresses his dissatisfaction with the traditional view, particularly with that part of the reconstruction that surrounds the anonymous *Elenchos*. He proposes "to take up again the problem of the author of the *Elenchos*, and to treat it with a method as rigorous as possible."²⁶ The common thesis is based on "the method of elimination" used by Döllinger²⁷ and others and on the resemblances of several titles mentioned in the *Elenchos* to those of works acknowledged to be Hippolytean. The only reliable criterion, however, is a comparative study of the text itself. Hence Nautin sets himself to compare the *Elenchos* with the fragment known as the *Contra Noetum*, a work "of which the authenticity is not doubtful"²⁸ and which parallels the end of the *Elenchos* in content.

1. *Comparison of the Elenchos and the Contra Noetum*. Following a brief chapter in which he demonstrates effectively the authenticity and integrity of the *Contra Noetum*, the author compares the two treatises on four points where he has discovered significant contrasts.

1. There are several differences in theology. (a) The *Contra Noetum* is careful to affirm the preexistence of the Holy Spirit, whereas the *Elenchos* refers only to the first two persons of the Trinity. (b) The word *pais* is used by Hippolytus in the fragment to refer to the Son only *after* his incarnation, while in the *Elenchos* it is employed of the preincarnate Word. (c) For the *Elenchos* the conception of salvation is that of deification, but this idea is absent not only from the *Contra Noetum* but from all the clearly authentic works of Hippolytus. (d) The profuse imagery of the afterlife that characterizes the *Elenchos* stands in marked contrast to the silence of the fragment and the general reserve of Hippolytus on this subject. (e) The *Contra Noetum* takes care to underline the dual nature of Christ as God and man, while the *Elenchos*, in opposition to docetism, emphasizes only the humanity of Christ.²⁹

2. There is a difference in the method of treating heresies. The method of the *Elenchos* is philosophical and attempts to link the heresies up to the time of Noetus with the teachings of Heraclitus. In the *Contra Noetum* it is sufficient for the author to show that a heresy has been condemned by the fathers and that it is refuted by the Scriptures.³⁰

3. Closely related to the previous point is a difference of "spirit" or disposition. The author of the *Elenchos* has read the opinions of the philosophers, and his "Exposition of the Truth" is occupied very much with the problems that philosophy poses for Christianity. Hippolytus, however, wishes only to study the piety

²⁶P. Nautin, *Hippolyte et Josipe* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1947) 35.

²⁷J. J. I. von Döllinger, *Hippolytus and Callistus* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1876) 1-5; Nautin, *Josipe* 29.

²⁸Nautin, *Josipe* 35.

²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 48-51. See further contrasts in Nautin, *Hippolyte: Contre les hérésies (fragment)* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1949) 153-193.

³⁰Nautin, *Josipe* 51.

taught in the Scriptures: "He is above all an exegete of ecclesiastical formation."³¹

4. Finally, Nautin detects a difference in style, which though not conclusive in itself serves at least to confirm the preceding contrasts.³²

2. *The Author of the Elenchos.* The question now raised is whether it is possible to discover the author of the *Elenchos*. The work itself is anonymous, but it makes reference to other treatises by the same author. Particularly significant is the mention of the seventy-two nations that arose after the dispersion of Gen 11—this has been discussed "in other books."³³ This note apparently corresponds to a list found in the anonymous *Chronicle* commonly ascribed to the pen of Hippolytus. The *Chronicle*, however, cannot be Hippolytean. First, various characteristics of content, style and attitude confirm that it belongs probably to the anonymous author of the *Elenchos*.³⁴ Second, there are a number of chronological contradictions between the *Chronicle* and the *Commentary on Daniel* that are decisive against the Hippolytean origin of the former treatise.³⁵

In addition to the *Chronicle*, the *Elenchos* refers to another work entitled *On the Essence of the Universe*. This is probably the work described by Photius and John Philopon as having been transmitted to them under the name of Josephus.³⁶ A fragment preserved in the *Sacra Parallela* of John of Damascus under the same name and title given by Photius offers "numerous and very precise resemblances" to the *Elenchos* on the basis of which "one need not hesitate to attribute the two works to the same author."³⁷

The common authorship of the *Elenchos*, the *Chronicle* and the treatise *On the Essence of the Universe* is supported by the anonymous statue of the Tiburtine Way. The last two of these compositions find their equivalent titles listed on the back of the statue, and the bibliographical listing and the Easter canon engraved here "denote certainly a disposition of the same type as the author of the *Elenchos*"³⁸—one occupied with philosophy, history and computation. But if the evidence points to the figure in the statue as the author of the *Elenchos* it is clear that this person cannot be Hippolytus, for neither the work nor the "intellectual

³¹Ibid., pp. 51-52.

³²Ibid., p. 53.

³³Hippolytus *Elenchos* 10.30 (p. 286).

³⁴Nautin, *Josipe* 67-68.

³⁵Nautin (*Josipe* 69-70) originally gave three contradictions: (1) the difference in the duration assigned to the life of Christ, (2) the variation in the reckoning of the period from the deportation to Babylon to the birth of Christ, and (3) the difference in the date given for the nativity. He was later to add (4) the difference in order and number in the lists of Persian kings (*Contre les hérésies* 217) and (5) the variation in the number of ancestors reckoned to the genealogy of Christ ("L'auteur du Comput Pascal de 222 et de la Chronique anonyme de 235," *RSR* 42 [1954] 243).

³⁶Nautin, *Josipe* 71-73.

³⁷Ibid., p. 78.

³⁸Ibid., p. 80.

physiognomy" of Hippolytus correspond to the data given by the statue.

Is it possible to discover the name of this unknown author? Nautin believes that he has done so. The treatise *On the Essence of the Universe* has been linked with the name *Iōsépos* (or near equivalents) by the *Sacra Parallela* of John of Damascus, John Philopon and Photius. It is often supposed, in common with Philopon and Photius, that this name designates Josephus the Jewish historian and that it has been introduced at some later period to an originally anonymous work. It is most improbable, however, that the name of Josephus would have been imposed on this writing. Why would anyone choose to make a Jew the author of a treatise that mentions Christ?—an argument used by Philopon himself to refute this attribution.³⁹

But if the name *Iōsépos* is not a later addition, then it must be original and must designate not the Jewish historian but the adversary of Callistus and true author of the treatise.⁴⁰ This explains the disappearance of the name from the *Chronicle* and the *Elenchos*. When Josipe (as Nautin transliterates *Iōsépos*) the antipope had been forgotten—as apparently had happened already in the time of Eusebius—the name was understood to refer to Josephus the Jew. But such an ascription to a chronological treatise running up to the year 235 and to a catalogue of Christian heresies formed a gross anachronism. The name was therefore suppressed in the first case and in the second (the *Elenchos*) replaced by the name of Origen. The original name was maintained in connection with the shorter treatise *On the Essence of the Universe* because here it was not so astonishing.⁴¹

3. *The Identity of Hippolytus.* If Hippolytus is not the author of the *Elenchos* or the person represented by the statue, what biographical details can be given of him? Clearly, very few. The statement of Eusebius that Hippolytus was a bishop rests on suspicious grounds: "The episcopate of Hippolytus is, therefore, quite insecure."⁴² Nor does the hagiographic tradition prove that he was a Roman martyr since his name was probably a common one.⁴³ Indeed, the evidence from his writings shows that he could not have been a Roman.⁴⁴ The statement of Photius that Hippolytus was a disciple of Irenaeus is probably faulty: The late date (according to Nautin's analysis) of the *Contra Noetum* removes its author rather far from the time of Irenaeus.⁴⁵ Further evidence of a later date for the activity of Hippolytus is found in the *Sitz im Leben* of the *Commentary on Daniel* and the treatise *On Christ and Antichrist*. The background of persecution in these writings is probably to be identified not with the Severan persecution of 202 but with

³⁹Ibid., pp. 85-87; *Contre les hérésies* 222-224.

⁴⁰Nautin, *Josipe* 87.

⁴¹Nautin, *Contre les hérésies* 225.

⁴²Nautin, *Josipe* 89.

⁴³Ibid., p. 91.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 92-93.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 95.

the persecution under Decius in 250. Jerome's report that Hippolytus preached to Origen is not impossible.⁴⁶

On the other hand, if the facts of his life are quite uncertain, the works that he authored allow us to discover rather exactly his "intellectual physiognomy." "He appears in them as quite representative of the traditional type of churchman, preoccupied with the welfare of souls, finding all knowledge in the Scriptures, and profoundly attached to the church."⁴⁷

III. CRITICAL RESPONSE TO NAUTIN'S THESIS

From its first appearance *Hippolyte et Josipe* drew widespread opposition from patristic scholars. A large debate ensued in which Nautin maintained his basic position and responded to a variety of criticisms leveled against his theory. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine these arguments in detail.⁴⁸ It is instructive, however, to note several main aspects of the discussion.

1. *Comparison of the Elenchos and the Contra Noetum.* The contrasts between these two works form the pivotal point of Nautin's argument. Two basic types of responses are given by his opponents.

(a) There are efforts to minimize some of the divergences raised by Nautin. For example, reference to the "abundant imagery" of the afterlife that appears in the *Elenchos* over against the silence of the *Contra Noetum* and the reserve of the exegetical writings is regarded as rather an exaggeration—in fact, the *Elenchos* devotes only four lines to the subject.⁴⁹ Or again, it is suggested that the notion of deification found in *Elenchos* 10.34, while unique to the other Hippolytean writings, is probably not far removed from their thinking. If "the words *theopoiein* and *athanatos* are here connected so that one interprets the other,"⁵⁰ then we are moving in the same basic sphere as the exegetical writings,⁵¹ and the particular wording may be due largely to the influence of Irenaeus on the immediate context.⁵²

(b) Where the differences are more substantial, scholars still dissent from the conclusion that these must be the work of two different authors. Gustave Bardy attributes many of the differences to the changed circumstances that surrounded the writing of the later *Elenchos*—namely, the influence of modalism on popes

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 100.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 101.

⁴⁸A useful summary of the Hippolytus-Josipe controversy, especially as it relates to the fragment *Contra Noetum*, is found in *Hippolytus of Rome: Contra Noetum* (Heythrop Monographs 2; ed. R. Butterworth; London: Heythrop College, 1977).

⁴⁹H. de Riedmatten, "Critical Notice: *Hippolyte et Josipe*," *Dominican Studies* 1 (1948) 171.

⁵⁰D. Ritschl, "Hippolytus' Conception of Deification: Remarks on the Interpretation of *Refutation* x, 34," *SJT* 12 (1959) 396.

⁵¹E.g. (*Comm. Dan.* 4.37 [GCS; ed. Bonwetsch, p. 284]): *tois de dikaios kai eis auton elpikasin ten aionion athanasian paraskē*.

⁵²Ritschl, "Deification," esp. p. 394.

Zephyrinus and Callistus.⁵³ Dom Capelle emphasizes the different purposes for which the two treatises were written, as well as the possible evolution of the thought of Hippolytus during the years that intervened between their composition.⁵⁴ Jean Daniélou suggests that the difference of publics to which the works were addressed may have played a part.⁵⁵ Nautin's failure to attend to these various possibilities is well stated in one of the most discerning early critiques of his theory:

The essential part of his argument lies in his distinguishing of the author of the *Elenchos* from the author of the fragment *Contra Noetum*. If M. Nautin should convince on this point, then we should have no choice but to accept the other conclusions which he argues so ably. One is therefore all the more surprised that this crucial argument fails to take into account an analysis of the character and content of the two opposing works, the *Elenchos* and the *Contra Noetum*. To argue from their respective proposals and omissions is to presume that their nature, composition and viewpoint are identical.⁵⁶

2. *Chronological Contradictions.* Among Nautin's supporting arguments perhaps the strongest is that of the chronological contradictions between the anonymous *Chronicle* and the *Commentary on Daniel*. The main interchange on this subject was provided in a series of articles by Marcel Richard,⁵⁷ whose work is a fine example of exegesis based on a careful reading of the texts and an extensive knowledge of ancient Christian chronography. In a detailed examination of the alleged contradictions Richard found that they often concealed facts that actually supported the common authorship of the two works. We will mention just one example: the duration of the life of Christ.

Nautin points out that the *Chronicle*, in assigning thirty years to the interval between the nativity and the passion of Christ, is at variance with the *Commentary on Daniel* which allows 33 years to the same period. Richard, however, answers convincingly that the latter work actually supports both chronologies and that the longer one is the result of an incomplete redaction of the *Commentary* by a writer familiar with the *Chronicle* of Eusebius of Caesarea.⁵⁸ Proceeding beyond this he suggests that the two chronological indications for the passion, "VIII Kalends of April" (March 26) and "under the consulates of Rufus and Rubellius,"⁵⁹ constitute a positive argument in favor of the western provenance of the

⁵³G. Bardy, "L'énigme d'Hippolyte," *MScRel* 5 (1948) 84-85.

⁵⁴Capelle, "Hippolyte d'Rome" 173 nn. 40-41.

⁵⁵J. Daniélou, "Bulletin d'histoire des origines Chrétiennes," *RSR* 35 (1948) 597; B. Botte, "Note sur l'auteur du *De universo* attribué à saint Hippolyte," *RTAM* 18 (1953) 8, 16.

⁵⁶Riedmatten, "Critical Notice" 169.

⁵⁷M. Richard, "Comput et chronographie chez Saint Hippolyte," *MScRel* 7 (1950) 237-268; 8 (1951) 19-50; "Encore le problème d'Hippolyte," *MScRel* 10 (1953) 13-52, 145-180; "Dernières remarques sur s. Hippolyte et le soi-disant Josipe," *RSR* 43 (1955) 379-394.

⁵⁸Richard, "Chronographie" 19-22. It seems probable that Eusebius was the first to prefer the "longer" chronology of the gospel of John to that of the synoptics in establishing the death of Christ in the eighteenth year of Tiberius (*ibid.*, pp. 23-31).

⁵⁹Hippolytus *Comm. Dan.* 4.23 (p. 242).

Commentary and support the traditional reconstruction of the life of Hippolytus.⁶⁰ Nautin, in a follow-up article, acknowledges the agreement between the two treatises but, because it is significant for his own thesis, denies that the mention of a specific date for the crucifixion and the reference to the Roman consulates is sufficient evidence for the occidental origin of the *Commentary*.⁶¹ The counter-arguments offered by him, however, are less than convincing, and after a careful—if somewhat sarcastic—examination by Richard⁶² he was happy to drop the point in succeeding discussions.

3. *Evidence of the Statue*. Nautin contests the induction by which the statue has been identified with Hippolytus. He questions first the validity of the assumption that Hippolytus the author and Hippolytus the martyr are one and the same: "Homonymy is not a sufficient proof for a name so common."⁶³ He is also skeptical of the value of Eusebius' notice ascribing a paschal chronicle to Hippolytus,⁶⁴ and he minimizes greatly the significance of the concordances between the titles listed on the statue and those of the works generally attributed to Hippolytus.⁶⁵ It seems unnecessary to treat all these points in detail, but two observations are in order.

(a) Nautin's historical skepticism—useful in moderation—appears to have been enlisted exclusively in the service of his theory. Perhaps "homonymy is not a sufficient proof" for identifying our Hippolytus with the martyr of the same name, but the discovery of the statue above the catacomb of Hippolytus supplies the data for a chain of induction that goes far beyond the point of homonymy. Summarizing the evidence for this induction, Capelle has well asked:

Who will believe that, in spite of this adequate correspondence for the time, the place, the content and the circumstances, it is a case of two different personages, and that by the fatality of chance the statue of the one would have been thrown away on the tomb of the other?⁶⁶

(b) When skepticism no longer seems possible, the explanations of Nautin become suspiciously ingenious: If it cannot reasonably be denied that Eusebius refers to the same Easter canon as that given on the statue, then the copy that he possessed was falsely attributed to Hippolytus;⁶⁷ if it is possible (according to Jerome) that Hippolytus wrote a treatise *On the Psalms*, this need not be the same work referred to on the statue since treatises like this may have been written

⁶⁰Richard, "Chronographie," esp. pp. 36-37, 47.

⁶¹Nautin, "La controverse sur l'auteur de *L'Elenchos*," *RHE* 47 (1952) 20-26.

⁶²Richard, "Encore" 145-163.

⁶³Nautin, "Controverse" 30.

⁶⁴Nautin (*Josipe* 83) does not contest that the paschal canon of the statue is the same that is referred to by Eusebius. Rather, he suggests that the name of Hippolytus had somehow become falsely associated with this work, which is actually from the pen of Josipe.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

⁶⁶B. Capelle, "A propos d'Hippolyte de Rome," *RTAM* 19 (1952) 194.

⁶⁷Nautin, "Controverse" 32; *Josipe* 83.

by several authors;⁶⁸ if Hippolytus wrote two treatises *On the Gifts of the Spirit* and *The Apostolic Tradition*—coinciding with the two consecutive titles *Peri charismatōn* and *Apostolikē paradosis* in the list of the statue—this may only indicate that Hippolytus himself made use of the two previous works of the same title composed by Josipe and cited on the statue.⁶⁹ With such ingenuity at work it must be asked seriously if there is any evidence that could stand in the way of Nautin's theory.

4. *Evidence of the Name Iōsēpos.* As we have seen, the appearance of the name *Iōsēpos* in connection with the treatise *On the Essence of the Universe* has been interpreted by Nautin as the clue to the authorship not only of that work but also of the anonymous *Elenchos* and the *Chronicle*. The main question regarding this name is whether, as most historians have understood it, *Iōsēpos* is a mistaken ascription to the Jewish historian Josephus of an originally anonymous Christian composition or whether, as Nautin argues, the name preserves the true identity of a Christian author now long forgotten by history.

The most significant contribution here is a study submitted by Bernard Botte. He regards the solution of Nautin as overly narrow in recognizing possible alternative explanations for the appearance of the name *Iōsēpos*. There is, according to the common theory, the possibility that the name is a conjecture. Nautin, he believes, has not given sufficient attention to this point.⁷⁰ But there is also the possibility that the name has resulted from contamination by neighboring texts in the manuscript of a florilegium.⁷¹ Or again, it could be the product of paleographic confusion with some abbreviated form of the name *Hippolytou*.⁷² Botte does not insist on any of these proposals but provides them only to show that there are various ways by which this Christian document could have been linked with Josephus the Jew. He concludes that if there is no other proof for the existence of an early Christian writer named *Iōsēpos* we are justified in striking this name from the rolls of literary history.⁷³

IV. RELEVANCE FOR BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP

To those familiar with the methodology of the so-called "higher criticism" of

⁶⁸Nautin, *Josipe* 84; *Contre les hérésies* 229.

⁶⁹Nautin, *Josipe* 81.

⁷⁰Botte, "Note sur l'auteur" 11. Botte finds what he believes may have provided the catalyst for this conjecture in a statement from the opening of the *Antiquities* of Josephus where the author promises to write a later work "on the causes of everything": *tois mentoi boulomenois kai tas aitas hekastou skopein, pollē genoitan hē theōria kai lian philosophos, hēn egō nyn men hyperballomai, theou de didontos hēmin chronon, peirasomai meta tautēn grapsai pragmateian* (*Ant.* proem 4).

⁷¹Botte, "Note sur l'auteur" 9.

⁷²Ibid., p. 13: "On peut se demander si l'abréviation *IPY* ou *IPPY* ne pourrait pas se lire aussi bien *I(ōsē)ppou* que *Ip(polyt)ou*."

⁷³Ibid.

the Bible, the relevance of the preceding discussion will be obvious. We may conclude with a few brief observations.

First, there is a striking similarity between the methods used by Nautin and those employed by the higher critics. Nautin's depreciation of the external evidence offered by the citations of the fathers, the martyrological accounts and the statue finds numerous parallels in the literary-critical assessment of much of Scripture. Guthrie notes, for example, that those who reject Pauline authorship of the pastoral epistles do so in the face of a consistent external tradition in favor of their authenticity.⁷⁴ Having chosen exclusively (or nearly so) in favor of internal criteria, the same type of arguments (and conclusions) are found in Nautin and his Biblical counterparts. Thus differences in style, differences in content, and apparent chronological or historical contradictions lead inevitably to the conclusion of multiple authorship.

Second, in view of these close resemblances the respective fates accorded to these theories by scholarly circles is all the more fascinating. For if it is safe to say that the general conclusions of higher criticism have been received favorably by the majority of Biblical scholars, then it is equally true that Nautin's thesis has from the first been virtually unanimously rejected by patristic scholars. In my studies I have found only one review of Nautin's work that endorsed it without criticism. The reviewer admitted that he had "no particular competence" in the field (actually he was a Biblical scholar), but he stated that he was favorably inclined to the thesis because of the rigor and clarity of the methods employed.⁷⁵ Is it possible that faulty methodology learned in Biblical disciplines had predisposed him to accept what the experts in a cognate field would reject?

Finally, we should observe that the arguments used by patristic scholarship to refute Nautin's position are essentially the same as those used by conservative Biblical scholars in defending the authenticity and integrity of various sections of Scripture. From this recent example evangelicals may be encouraged that their similar endeavors are not just exercises in special pleading but instead reflect the standard practice of related disciplines.

⁷⁴D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1970) 588.

⁷⁵P. Benoit, "Bulletin," *RB* (1948) 630-632.