The Four Kingdoms of Daniel in Hippolytus's *Commentary on Daniel*

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1 Introduction*

In Hippolytus's *Commentary on Daniel* (composed in Rome, 204 CE),¹ the motif of the four kingdoms of Daniel 2 and Daniel 7–8 plays a prominent role. In connection with this motif, the author develops a concept of the chronological sequence of historical events in time and at the end time, which bears interpretive fruit in different ways.² This intense interest in time and the end time seems at first to be surprising, since Hippolytus repeatedly speaks out against calculations of the events of the end time because such things are

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- 1 Although Pierre Nautin's investigation *Hippolyte et Josipe: Contribution à l'histoire de la littérature chrétienne du troisième siècle*, ETHDT 1 (Paris: Cerf, 1947) in the 19th century called into question the unity of the body of writings attributed to Hippolytus and the identity of its author, in more recent research a consensus with respect to the so-called Hippolytus question has emerged, which concludes that the author of the biblical commentaries (see the list of the twelve commentaries by Hippolytus in Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 2 vols. [Leiden: Brill, 2004], 1:528–35, here 529–532) is identical with the author of the writings *De Christo et antichristo* and *Contra Noëtum*. On this see Katharina Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift In Danielem: Kommunikative Strategien eines frühchristlichen Kommentars*, STAC 85 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 28, 400, which also counts the additional writings *Contra Gaium*, *Chronicon*, and the *Easter Table*; Enrico Norelli, "Hippolyte et le corpus Hippolytéen," in *Histoire de la littérature grecque chrétienne des origines à 451: De Clément d'Alexandrie à Eusèbe de Césarée* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2017), 3:415–482, here 3:415–435, 3:461–477. Further attributions of writings beyond this core inventory are controversial. For dating and localization, see Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift*, 50–68, 398–401; Katharina Bracht, "Einleitung," in *Hippolyt von Rom: Danielkommentar*, ed. and trans. Katharina Bracht, BGL 80 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2016), VII–LX, here XIVf.
- 2 In addition to time and end time, Hippolytus uses two further conceptions of time that are not relevant for the present discussion: a chiliastic model of time (*Dan.* IV.22–24) and a detailed end-time calculation in his interpretation of the 70 weeks of years from Jer^{LXX} 25:11 / DanTh 9 (*Dan.* IV.28–35). On this, see Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift*, 312–333; 347–349, 365–368.

expressions of unbelief (*Dan.* IV.5.6) and are expressions of unseemly impatience (*Dan.* IV.15.1; IV.22.1–4). In this essay, I explore this contradiction and illuminate it in light of the character of the work as a whole. Towards this goal, Hippolytus's *Commentary on Daniel* will be presented first, and then his interpretations of Daniel's concept of four world eras will be presented in the context of the entire work.

2 Hippolytus's *Commentary on Daniel*

2.1 *The Challenges of the Exegesis of Daniel around 200 CE*

Hippolytus's *Commentary on Daniel* is considered to be the oldest, completely preserved interpretation of a biblical text by a Christian author. The subject of the commentary is the biblical book of Daniel in Theodotion's Greek translation. The structure of the *Commentary on Daniel* follows the arrangement of its pretext such that the specific structure of DanTh—which places the Susanna narrative in front of the Aramaic-Hebrew book of Daniel and which inserts the extensive prayers of Azariah and the three youths in the fiery furnace (DanTh 3:24–90)—is mirrored in Hippolytus's *Commentary on Daniel*. The commenting is carried out in a recurring sequence of lemmas from the pretext, which often consist of several verses of DanielTh, followed by comments. Only the stories of Daniel and Bel, as well as Daniel and the dragon (BelDrTh), are left curiously without comment by Hippolytus, even though they were known to him.³

In his cursory commentary on the book of Daniel, Hippolytus takes up the theme of the four kingdoms where he treats the relevant chapter of the book of Daniel. Accordingly, his discussion on this theme occurs in two places within the *Commentary on Daniel*, that is, in two different contexts. The first occurrence is in the second book of the commentary, which interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue (DanTh 2) and—irrelevant for the present discussion—the story of the three young men in the fiery furnace (DanTh 3) (*Dan.* II.1–13 on DanTh 2). The second discussion occurs in the fourth book of the commentary, which provides commentary on Daniel's visions (DanTh 7–12) (*Dan.* IV.1–27 on DanTh 7–8).

But why does Hippolytus endeavor to make any comment at all here? Let us recall how great the temporal distance between the contemporary reader of the biblical book of Daniel (ca. 200 CE) is from the time when the book came into existence. Modern historical-critical research dates the final redaction of

3 See, for example, *Dan.* II.26.1–3; II.35.2.

the Aramaic-Hebrew book of Daniel between 170 and 160 BCE,⁴ the origin of the Theodotion edition to the turn of the era⁵ or to the 1st century CE,⁶ and the origin of the Theodotion narrative of Susanna to the first quarter of the 1st century CE.⁷ This means that the actual temporal distance between Hippolytus's pretext and his present time was between ca. 370 years (Dan^{Aram-Hebr}) or ca. 200 years (DanTh) and ca. 175 years (SusTh). According to Hippolytus's own calculation, this distance might have even been about 687 years because he dates the visions and the prophecies of Daniel to the time of the Babylonian exile.⁸ Hippolytus emphasizes the great temporal distance between the pretext which he interprets and his own time repeatedly through the terminological pairing of "then—now."⁹ Jan Assmann has plausibly explained the challenges that the antiquity of such a canonical text poses for later readers: the "stretching of the communicative situation" ("Zerdehnung der Kommunikationssituation")¹⁰ as he called it, must be overcome. This phenomenon occurs because the author's message, which was originally addressed to a contemporary readership, is "preserved" in a canonical text and in this way reaches readers along the way, not as if in a conversation, but at a temporal distance of often more than several hundred years. In our case, this means that

- 4 See Klaus Koch, "Das aramäisch-hebräische Danielbuch: Konfrontation zwischen Weltmacht und monotheistischer Religionsgemeinschaft in universalgeschichtlicher Perspektive," in *Die Geschichte der Danielauslegung in Judentum, Christentum und Islam: Studien zur Kommentierung des Danielbuches in Literatur und Kunst*, ed. Katharina Bracht and David S. du Toit, BZAW 371 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 3–27, here 3.
- 5 See Helmut Engel, *Die Susanna-Erzählung: Einleitung, Übersetzung und Kommentar zum Septuaginta-Text und zur Theodotion-Bearbeitung*, OBO 61 (Freiburg [Schweiz]: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1985), 57.
- 6 See Alexander A. Di Lella, "Introduction," in *The Book of Daniel*, ed. Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, AB 23 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1978), 3–110, here 82. For a brief overview of the history of research on the dating of DanTh, see Bracht, *Hippolytus Schrift*, 35–38.
- 7 See Engel, *Die Susanna-Erzählung*, 41.
- 8 According to Hipp. *Dan.* IV.30.4–6; 31.1, 69 weeks or 483 years lie between Daniel's appearance in Babylon and Christ's birth (historically, this is not correct, of course, because according to the current state of research, the first deportation took place in the year 597 BCE). This includes the 204 years that, according to the dating of the *Commentary on Daniel* above, have elapsed since then until the formation of the writing.
- 9 Πάλαι / τότε—νῦν: Proof and discussion of the passages are in Bracht, *Hippolytus Schrift*, 70–75.
- 10 Jan Assmann, "Text und Kommentar. Einführung," in *Text und Kommentar, Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation IV*, ed. Jan Assmann and Burkhard Gladigow (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1995), 9–33, here 21–23. In this essay, Assmann explains the emergence of commentary literature in general. With regard to Hippolytus's *Commentary on Daniel*, see Bracht, *Hippolytus Schrift*, 7–9.

the biblical book of Daniel was no longer easily understandable to Christians in Rome around 200 CE due to the changes in the religious perspective (it was written as early Jewish scripture, but read by Christians), in the applicable value system, and in the plausibility structures that had occurred in the meantime. Nevertheless, they expected that the canonical text was relevant, indeed authoritative, for their group identity and the associated structural norms. The discrepancy between expectations on the one hand and a lack of understanding on the other was the problem for which Hippolytus sought a solution. Obviously, he considered a continuation or an adaptation of the wording to the new circumstances as impossible because of the authority he ascribed to the biblical book of Daniel.¹¹ Therefore, Hippolytus looked for another way and chose an explanatory procedure: the lemma-commentary method.

Like many other ancient commentaries, Hippolytus's *Commentary on Daniel* presumably had its own *Sitz im Leben* within the context of Christian education. Hippolytus describes his approach to commenting, which he often designs as diatribe,¹² as "exposition" (ἀπόδειξις; *Dan.* 1.2.1), or as "investigation" (ζήτημα; *Dan.* 11.11.1). He addresses his readers as "those who love learning" (*Dan.* 1.7.2; 18.1) and "lovers of truth" (*Dan.* 11.11.2), and occasionally intersperses methodological-hermeneutical remarks in which he demands that the biblical scriptures be read not superficially "passing over" them but "with understanding" (*Dan.* 1.2.1; 7.2; 11.11.1f.). Hippolytus attributes theological errors and false doctrines to the lack of careful or even complete study of scripture, as well as to the lack of education (ἀπαιδευσία), and folly (μωρία; *Dan.* 1V.18.2–4; 19.1; cf. 1V.20.1). Presumably, the work is the manuscript of the teacher, which he formulated in writing before the lecture.¹³ Despite all the demands for scholarly

11 Hippolytus clearly proceeded from the principle of the "closed" nature of his pretext, i.e., from its unchangeability because of its canonicity. In a situation in which the Christian communities in Rome were debating which of the circulating Greek versions of the book of Daniel was to be regarded as canonical—the Septuagint version, the Theodotion version, or a possible third, independent version as used by Justin—he took a clear position by using the lemmata of DanTh, thereby also establishing a common textual basis for teachers and students (see Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift*, 155). In a canonical-historical regard, therefore, Hippolytus's *Commentary on Daniel* is an important point along the path that led to establishing DanTh as opposed to Dan^{LXX} within the purview of Christian churches (see Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift*, 42–50).

12 The author repeatedly addresses the reader directly, often using the inclusive "we," allowing a fictitious interlocutor to anticipate a possible objection, formulating rhetorical or real questions, referring to what has already been said, sometimes allowing the train of thought to progress through associated connections and sometimes digressing thematically. On this, see Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift*, 96–127.

13 Thus, individual passages composed very carefully, which do not correspond to a student's lecture notes, can be explained in this way. On this, see for example Hipp. *Dan.* 1.15.6–16.1;

integrity and meticulousness, the focus is on the orientation of the church. Classical elements of education are missing, such that it can be assumed that Hippolytus wrote his *Commentary on Daniel* for classes in a Christian philosophical school taught at a popular philosophical level.¹⁴ Among his listeners and readers were not only men, but also explicitly women (*Dan.* 1.23.2; 25.4), which was unusual in comparison to contemporary pagan¹⁵ or rabbinic Jewish educational institutions.¹⁶

2.2 *Background: Hippolytus's Communicative Strategies in His Commentary on Daniel*

In order to overcome the so-called “stretching of the communicative situation” (“Zerdehnung der Kommunikationssituation”) and to update the old biblical pretext for the contemporary readership, especially his students, Hippolytus uses various communicative strategies. In this essay I shall demonstrate how he uses the schema of four world eras with an eschatological end phase, which he takes from Daniel 2 and Daniel 7–8, in order to develop perspectives for the future and for the end time. In this way, he addresses the problem of an imminent expectation of the end that is currently arising in his congregation.¹⁷ Furthermore, with the help of a christological argument, Hippolytus presents a continuity spanning the world empires from “then” to “now.” He sees this continuity guaranteed by Christ’s unbroken, at all times uniform work, who has been active as “fleshless Logos” (λόγος ἄσαρκος) since the creation of the world, who assisted the three young men in the fiery furnace in Babylon (*Dan.* 11.30.3), who was also active in Daniel’s day (*Dan.* 1.23.2),¹⁸ and who now, since Christ’s birth, that is, at the time of the Roman Empire, has been active as the “incarnated Logos” (λόγος ἐνσαρκος; *Dan.* 11.33.5).¹⁹

For the sake of completeness, additional communicative strategies should be mentioned here to show, with a view to the entire commentary, that the

1.16.2–5 with the analysis in Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift*, 177–81; see also Bracht, “Einleitung,” xviii.

14 See Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift*, 155–57.

15 In the Roman school system of the second century, girls of wealthy parents were able to attend elementary and grammar school. On this, see Henri Irénée Marrou, *Geschichte der Erziehung im klassischen Altertum* (Freiburg; Munich: Alber, 1957), 391, 401.

16 See Friedrich Avemarie, “Jüdische Schriftgelehrsamkeit,” in *Neues Testament und antike Kultur: Familie—Gesellschaft—Wirtschaft*, ed. Kurt Erlemann, Karl Leo Noethlichs, Klaus Scherberich, and Jürgen Zangenberg (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2005), 2:244–248, here 2:245.

17 See Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift*, 300–12.

18 See Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift*, 279–87, esp. 285.

19 See Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift*, 286.

theme of the four kingdoms represents only one aspect of Hippolytus's exegesis of Daniel. Hippolytus also updates the Susanna narrative by interpreting the situation of his congregation with the help of its interpretation. For this purpose, he points to an analogous situation between Susanna, who is persecuted and harassed by the two elders in order to seduce her to infidelity to her husband Joachim, and the persecution of the congregation, which is harassed both by the Roman state and by "the Jews" and is seduced to infidelity to Christ.²⁰ Furthermore, following passages from the biblical book of Daniel, he reflects on ethical questions that were apparently of current importance to his community. Above all, he considers intensely the relationship to the state authorities (*Dan.* III on *Dan*Th 4–6) in order to obtain corresponding behavioral norms.²¹ In addition to this, by means of a historical-paradigmatic interpretation of various episodes of the book of Daniel (Susanna; *Dan*Th 3: the three young men in the fiery furnace; *Dan*Th 6: Daniel in the lion's den), he obtains role models for his readers in their special situation as a troubled congregation.²² Hippolytus is able to make this argument on the basis of his hermeneutical presuppositions that the book of Daniel, like the entirety of Holy Scripture, should be understood historically and that it was written to admonish its readers. Finally, Hippolytus is also familiar with the typological-allegorical method of interpretation. An excursus on the Paradise narrative according to *Gen*^{LXX} 2:8–10; 3 (*Dan.* 1.18), which Hippolytus interprets in order to assure his congregation of its identity as the church,²³ turns into a masterpiece of typological-allegorical interpretation.

3 The Four Kingdoms of Daniel in the Context of the *Commentary on Daniel*

3.1 *Hippolytus's Concept of Time and the End Time*

In the background of Hippolytus's remarks stands a consistent concept of time and the end time, which he sketches with his interpretation of Daniel. This concept of time and end time will be reproduced here first before proceeding further.

²⁰ See Bracht, *Hippolytus Schrift*, 166–95.

²¹ See Bracht, *Hippolytus Schrift*, 260–78. Cf. also the reflection on the second repentance in the context of an excursus on the Paradise narrative (*Dan.* 1.18.11 on *Gen*^{LXX} 9; see Bracht, *Hippolytus Schrift*, 214–21).

²² See Bracht, *Hippolytus Schrift*, 222–60.

²³ See Bracht, *Hippolytus Schrift*, 198–22.

Hippolytus draws a parallel relationship between the meaning of the four animals from Daniel 7–8 and the parts of the statue from Daniel 2 (*Dan.* IV.7.2–6). The hermeneutic key of his interpretation lies in a typological understanding of the passage: Hippolytus assumes that both the statue from Daniel 2, which was shown to Nebuchadnezzar, represents a “typological prediction of the kingdom of the whole world” (ἡ γὰρ εἰκὼν ἡ ... δειχθεῖσα τῷ Ναβουχοδονόσορ τὸν τύπον περιεῖχεν τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου; Hipp. *Dan.* II.12.2) as well as the animals “in a model and image portray the kingdoms” (ἐν τύπῳ καὶ εἰκόνι δείκνυσιν τὰς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ ἐπαναστάσας βασιλείας; *Dan.* IV.2.1).²⁴

Daniel's four world eras consist of the kingdoms of Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece, with the later decay of the Diadochian kingdoms which flows into God's eschatological kingdom.²⁵ Hippolytus is faced with the challenge that the contemporary world empire, that is, the Roman Empire, does not appear within the sequence of kingdoms which the editor of the book of Daniel had in view—on the basis of modern, historical-critical exegesis we know that the Roman Empire could not have been in view because the final redaction of

24 Hippolytus's negative understanding of secular rule, according to which all these kingdoms destroy humanity like animals (ὥσπερ θηρία διαφθείροντα τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα; *Dan.* IV.2.1), is itself striking.

25 In the biblical book of Daniel, the sequence of the kingdoms begins with Babylon, which is symbolized by the golden head of the statue (*Dan*Th 2:32; interpreted as Nebuchadnezzar in *Dan*Th 2:38) and by the lioness of the vision of animals (*Dan*Th 7:4; interpreted as the first of the four kingdoms in *Dan*Th 7:17). The second kingdom is Media, which is symbolized by the silver breast of the statue (*Dan*Th 2:32; interpreted as Media under the rule of Darius in *Dan*Th 5:30f.) and the bear with the three ribs (*Dan*Th 7:5; with its interpretation in *Dan*Th 9:1). The bronze belly and thighs of the statue (*Dan*Th 2:32) and the third beast, the panther with four wings and four heads (*Dan*Th 7:6), stand for Persia (*Dan*Th 10:1). The fourth, chronologically the most recent kingdom in the biblical book of Daniel is Greece, or the kingdom of Alexander the Great, symbolized by the iron lower legs of the statue (*Dan*Th 2:33; interpreted as the fourth, exceedingly strong kingdom in *Dan*Th 2:40) and the fearsome beast with eleven horns (*Dan*Th 7:7; Greece as the kingdom that follows after Persia in *Dan*Th 10:20). The disintegration of the kingdom of Alexander the Great into the Diadochian kingdoms is expressed in the biblical book of Daniel by the various materials used for the feet of the statue, which are partly made of iron and partly made of clay (*Dan*Th 2:33; cf. 2:42f.) as well as by ten of the horns of the fearsome beast (*Dan*Th 7:7; cf. *Dan*Th 7:24; as well as *Dan*Th 8:22 in connection with the third partial parallel vision). The eleventh, small horn, for which there is no parallel in the vision of the statue in *Dan*Th 2, stands for the subsequent king who wages war against the saints, deprives them of power, and blasphemes God (*Dan*Th 7:21; 24f.)—the reference here, without being explicitly named, is Antiochus Epiphanes IV. After this, the eschatological future begins in the book of Daniel: the eternal kingdom of God (*Dan*Th 2:44f.), which is illustrated with the stone that is cut off from a mountain without any action by hands (*Dan*Th 2:34; interpreted in 2:44) and destroys the statue or illustrated with the one who comes “like the Son of Man” and receives authority and kingship from the “ancient of days” (*Dan*Th 7:13f.).

the book of Daniel took place at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes IV, around 164 BCE. Hippolytus must, therefore, modify the intended meaning within the book of Daniel in order to adapt the statement to his contemporary circumstances. Probably in connection with the interpretations that emerged within Jewish and Christian spheres at the end of the 1st century CE,²⁶ he substitutes Media as the second member with Persia, and puts Greece in the third position. By making this alteration, the fourth position is now free and can be occupied by the Roman Empire.²⁷ For Hippolytus, Daniel's prophecies extend all the way to the Roman Empire. The future—in contrast to his pretext—lets Hippolytus begin with the feet of the statue (*Dan.* 11.12.2) or the ten horns of the terrible beast (*Dan.* 1V.5–11).²⁸ They predict the future disintegration of the Roman Empire at the end of the world (*Dan.* 1V.5.3; 6.4; 7.5f.; cf. *Dan.* 11.12.7). Following this disintegration will be the appearance of the Antichrist, prophesied by the little horn of the terrible beast (*Dan.* 1V.5.3; 12.4). Hippolytus specifically interprets the stone, which was cut off from the mountain “without hands” (*Dan*Th 2:34–35), as Christ, who on the threshold of the eschaton “comes from the heavens” to destroy all earthly kingdoms and then establish the heavenly kingdom of the saints (*Dan.* 11.13.1–3).²⁹

3.2 *The Four Kingdoms of Daniel in the Context of Daniel's Prophetic Acts*

Since Hippolytus provides only a cursory interpretation of the biblical book of Daniel, his interpretation of *Dan*Th 2 appears at the very beginning of his *Commentary on Daniel* (*Dan.* 11.1–13). It is preceded only by the extensive commentary on the SusannaTh narrative (*Dan.* 1), into which Hippolytus

26 Within the Jewish sphere, cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 10.209 (10.10.4) in connection with *Ant.* 10.276 (10.11.7) and 2 Esdras 11.1–12, 20. Within the Christian sphere, see Rev 13:1–10.

27 See Hipp. *Dan.* 11.12–13 und *Dan.* 1V.2–7.

28 See Bracht, “Einleitung,” XXXIII–XXXVI, a table comparing *Dan*Th 2, *Dan*Th 7, and Hippolytus's interpretation.

29 The interpretation of the stone from *Dan* 2:34, 45 as Christ is a frequent motif among the early church fathers and in the Greek menaion. Cf. also Irenaeus *Haer.* 3.21.7; 5.26.2; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Myst. Cat.* 1.8; Theodoret, *Comm. Dan.* 2.35 (with an emphasis on Christ's humanity); Justin, *Dial.* 76.1; Epiphanius, *Anc.* 40.5 (with an emphasis on Christ's divinity). See Katharina Bracht, “Die Danielrezeption in der orthodoxen Tradition und ihre altkirchlichen Wurzeln,” in *Logos im Dialogos: Auf der Suche nach der Orthodoxie: Gedenkschrift für Hermann Goltz*, ed. A. Briskina-Müller, A. Drost-Abgarjan, and A. Meißner (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2011), 77–90, here 87f.; Katharina Bracht, “Daniel (Book and Person) IV. Christianity a. Greek and Latin Patristics and Orthodox Churches,” *EBR* 6:109–115, here 111. Josephus (*Ant.* 10.210 [10.10.4]), on the other hand, explicitly conceals the interpretation of the stone since, as a historian, it is not his place to record future events.

also inserted his commentary on DanTh 1 (*Dan.* 1.6–12). In his commentary on the narrative of how the Jewish prisoner of war, Daniel, in contrast to the Babylonian sages who were initially summoned, manages to describe and interpret the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the four-part statue, Hippolytus primarily takes up the motif that Daniel proves himself to be a prophet in this scene.

Hippolytus begins with the dream itself. He characterizes it as a “heavenly dream” that will be fulfilled “according to the plan and foreknowledge of God, which is fulfilled in their own times” (*Dan.* 11.2.1). That God hid not only the interpretation, but even the dream itself from the dreamer had its purpose in that he revealed it to another, namely Daniel—and *per definitionem*, the dream interpreter Daniel thereby proves himself to be a prophet (*Dan.* 11.2.5 with *passivum divinum*). With the help of the parallel to the narrative of Joseph, who interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh (*Gen*^{LXX} 41:1–38), Hippolytus shows that it is possible to infer that one has the gift of the spirit if that person is capable of interpreting dreams (*Dan.* 11.2.4f.). After Hippolytus repeatedly expressed this thought in his further comments on Daniel 2 (*Dan.* 11.6.7: Daniel as a prophet of God; cf. 11.5.2: Daniel is God-fearing and worthy [of revelation]), he emphasizes it again in the last sentence of his interpretation of Daniel 2, which is a particularly significant passage: Daniel confirms the truth of the dream and the reliability of the interpretation just given to possible doubters by virtue of his prophetic ministry (*Dan.* 11.13.4).

In this passage, Hippolytus clearly elaborates on Daniel's spirit-given gift of prophetic ministry, reinforcing and hammering down the authority of Daniel's prophecies—and thus the authoritative status of his pretext for his readers—for all the commentary that follows. At the same time, he considers that ambiguities can arise for readers of the book of Daniel, and, therefore, makes it clear that Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream also needs to be interpreted by them. Such interpretation demands accuracy and must reject superficiality. In short, Hippolytus demands that interpretation of the book of Daniel meets a scholarly standard (*Dan.* 11.11.1–2).³⁰ The interpreter must satisfy the criteria that he has a clear mind, loves the truth, and has researched thoroughly (*Dan.* 11.11.1–2). Thus, Hippolytus formulates an interpretative standard which he develops in his *Commentary on Daniel*, and thereby confers upon himself a seal of approval, so to speak.

Thus, the authorities (i) of the divine revelation in the “heavenly dream,” (ii) of the prophets gifted with the Spirit, and (iii) of the intelligent, scholarly interpreter come together, when Hippolytus presents the statue as a

30 See section above on “The Challenges of the Exegesis of Daniel around 200 CE.”

“typological prediction of the kingdom of all the world” (τὸν τύπον περιείχεν τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου; *Dan.* 11.12.1) in the central passage of *Dan.* 11.12–13. He begins with the golden head of the statue, which he understands to be the Babylonian kingdom (*Dan.* 11.12.3), in accordance with the interpretation given in *Dan*Th 2:37f. Concerning the subsequent kingdoms, whose coming is prophesied as being future in the book of Daniel (*Dan*Th 2:39–43), Hippolytus identifies three of them as having already arrived: the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman kingdoms (*Dan.* 11.12.4–6). He names precisely the duration of each respective kingdom, fulfilling the self-imposed demand for accuracy. The Persians ruled for 245 years, and the Greeks ruled for 300 years.³¹ By demonstrating so concretely that Daniel’s prophecy had already been fulfilled in large parts, even up to the mention of dates, Hippolytus underpins its credibility and strengthens its authority. He also uses this credibility for the prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled, that is, for the typologies of the clay and the iron toes of the statue and of the stone that comes from heaven (*Dan.* 11.12.7; 13.1–4).

Within this schema of world history, Hippolytus’s present time, during the age of the Roman Empire, is at the penultimate point in his construal of world history: he is located at a time before the second coming of Christ and the eschatological kingdom of the saints (*Dan.* 11.13.2). Although the collapse of the fourth world empire into regional states is still yet to come, it is conceived as a separate phase of world history (*Dan.* 11.12.7). The thrust of the interpretation of *Dan*Th 2, however, lies not so much in this schema but rather in establishing as early as possible within the commentary the authority of both Daniel’s prophecies and their interpretation within the present commentary. For this is the hermeneutical foundation on which Hippolytus’s further interpretation of the book of Daniel stands.

3.3 *The Four Kingdoms of Daniel in the Context of a Premature Expectation of the End*

3.3.1 The Opponents

In the fourth book of the *Commentary on Daniel*, Hippolytus has before him a current, concrete problem on which he takes a stand with his interpretation of Daniel’s four kingdoms. He turns against Christians who wish to make concrete end-time calculations. Already at an early point in his expositions

31 Hipp. *Dan.* 11.12.4f. Cf. *Dan.* 1v.3.4 (Persian rule was only 230 years, nevertheless Hippolytus in his efforts for historical precision and scholarly integrity states in the following sentence [1v.3.5] that the Persian rule lasted about 245 years according to other historians); 1v.4.1 (Greeks); 1v.24.7. See below in section entitled “Calculations of the Present and the End Time.”

(*Dan.* IV.5.6), he emphasizes what he will explain in detail later (*Dan.* IV.15.1–24.6). Readers are to reject the question of “when” these last events will occur, while nevertheless believing “that” they will occur in the future. On the other hand, he finds it appropriate to believe that the predictions in the book of Daniel will come true, but without talking about the details that might be connected with those predictions (*Dan.* IV.5.6).

Hippolytus describes the Christian group he rejected as follows. They want to know exactly “in what season or time is the deceiver to be revealed” and “what shall be the day of the appearing of the Lord” (ποίη δὲ καιρῷ ἢ χρόνῳ μέλλει ὁ πλάνος ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι; καὶ ποία ἡ ἡμέρα τῆς τοῦ κυρίου ἐπιφανείας; *Dan.* IV.16.1). They want to calculate “how many years remain for the beast (sc. the Roman Empire)” (πόσα ἔτη περιλείπεται τῷ θηρίῳ; *Dan.* IV.21.4) and to determine “the day of the Lord,” that is, “the consummation of all the world” (τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ κυρίου; τὴν συντέλειαν τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου; *Dan.* IV.22.1). Accordingly, these opponents tend towards an imminent expectation of the end, which views the appearance of the Lord as being imminent (*Dan.* IV.17.7f.).³²

Hippolytus rebukes these attempts at calculation, which “seek a time before the due time” (πρὸ καιροῦ καιρὸν ἐπιζητοῦντα), as “rash and heedless” (εἰχαῖον τε καὶ προαλῆ; *Dan.* IV.15.1) and “troublesome” (περίεργος; *Dan.* IV.21.4) and “doing busy, yet wasted research” (πολυπραγμονεῖν; *Dan.* IV.22.1). He warns that the one who examines and talks about such questions related to calculations attracts danger for himself by longing for judgment (*Dan.* IV.21.4f.) and “his own soul becomes liable” (ἔνοχος γένηται τῆς ἰδίας ψυχῆς; *Dan.* IV.15.1). All in all, Hippolytus rejects what he considers to be an unseemly curiosity that is not satisfied with the fact of Christ’s return and the end of the world, but makes concrete calculations on the basis of years.

As deterrent examples, he begins by citing cases in Syria and in Pontus which had recently happened³³ and in which the situation developed “similarly” (ὁμοίως; *Dan.* IV.19.1). That is to say, Hippolytus cites the two events as two proofs of one and the same thing. In Syria, a church leader persuaded many

32 Hippolytus’s rhetorical question is as follows: “And so while the abomination has not yet appeared, but while only the fourth beast still reigns, how is the manifestation of the Lord able to be?” (τοῦ οὖν βδελύγματος μηδέπω παραγενομένου, ἀλλ’ ἔτι τοῦ τετάρτου θηρίου μόνου κρατούντος, πῶς δύναται ἡ ἐπιφάνεια τοῦ κυρίου γενέσθαι; *Dan.* IV.17.7). Hippolytus enumerates the necessary signs according to Matthew 24, which have not yet come to pass.

33 Both examples are all the more serious as they tell of the theological error of high church officials. Richard Landes draws attention to this in his work, “Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography 100–800 CE,” in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. Werner Verbeke, Daniel Verhelst, and Andries Welkenhuysen, ML 15 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 137–211, esp. 147.

church members to go into the desert or into the mountains to meet Christ there for his return. But the expectation was not fulfilled; instead, the wandering Christians became a public nuisance. Only the coincidence that the governor's wife was a Christian and had spoken to her husband on behalf of Christians avoided a real persecution (*Dan.* IV.18.1–5). Hippolytus cites the case in Syria as an example of an erroneous, imminent expectation of the end that was caused by folly, a lack of education (*Dan.* IV.18.4), and insufficient reading of the scriptures (*Dan.* IV.18.2).³⁴

In Pontus, a church leader had trusted in his own visions, which had been given to him in dreams, instead of in holy scripture. He began prophesying as a prophet and even wanted to make his prophecies the yardstick for the credibility of the biblical scriptures. Eventually, he prophesied that the judgment would take place in a year's time. But when the judgment did not take place, this stoked anger among the members of his congregation. They gave up their rigorous ethics which were fashioned according to their imminent expectation of the end. The virgins married and the men looked once again to the future by going back to their daily work and tilling the fields. Those who had sold their possessions in anticipation of the imminent end became beggars (*Dan.* IV.19.1–6). In this example, the problem has to do with a new prophecy, that is, the appearance of a prophet who places his authority above the authority of scripture and wants to make the fulfillment of his prophecy the criterion for the truth of scripture.³⁵

Hippolytus then adds a third, contemporary phenomenon, saying that “some undertake the same things, clinging to vain visions and to the teachings of demons and often determining a fast both on the Sabbath and the Lord's day, which Christ did not determine” (cf. 1 Tim 4:1, 3; Hipp. *Dan.* IV.20.3). In this third case, the issue is fasting on unbiblical fast days, that is, a pronounced rigorism that is not covered by the scriptures or Christ's teaching.³⁶

34 See above the section entitled, “The Challenges of the Exegesis of Daniel around 200 CE.”

35 The supposition that by the event in Pontus Montanus himself is meant (thus Gerbern S. Oegema, “Die Danielrezeption in der Alten Kirche,” in *Europa, Tausendjähriges Reich und Neue Welt Zwei Jahrtausende Geschichte und Utopie in der Rezeption des Danielbuches*, ed. Mariano Delgado, Klaus Koch, and Edgar Marsch, SCR 1 [Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 2003], 1:84–104, esp. 1:89) is probably not correct due to the temporal and geographical conditions and due to the fact that Montanus worked much earlier (probably ca. 172 CE) in Phrygia. For dating, see Christoph Marksches, “Montanism,” in *Religion Past and Present*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Janowski, and Eberhard Jüngel, BrillOnline (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

36 On this, see Ronald E. Heine, *The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia*, PatMS 14 (Macon, GA: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 54–57; and William H. C. Frend, “Montanism,” *TRE* 23:271–279, here 23:272.1.

All three cases listed by Hippolytus have Montanist traits: the importance of visions that are placed above scripture, even seen as the yardstick for scripture;³⁷ the imminent expectation of the end;³⁸ the rigorous ethical standards that are demonstrated here by the example of fasting,³⁹ abstaining from marriage, and the lack of possessions;⁴⁰ and finally the strong position of women in the congregation, which can be seen here both in the influential wife of the governor of Syria and in the virginity of the women in the congregation at Pontus. Hippolytus probably distinguishes himself from certain Montanistic outgrowths among members of his congregation,⁴¹ which he wanted to put on the right, orthodox path through his interpretation of Daniel, in order to restore unity in the congregation.⁴²

37 See Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch, *Studien zu den Kommentaren Hippolyts: zum Buche Daniel und Hohen Liede*, TU 16 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897); cf. (Ps-) Hipp. Ref. 8.19; 10.25 (Heine, *Montanist Oracles*, 56–57, num. 32, 33); Tert. *Castit.* 10.5 (Heine, *Montanist Oracles*, 4–5, num. 10).

38 Cf. Epiph. *Pan.* 48.2.4 (Heine, *Montanist Oracles*, 2–3, num. 6).

39 Cf. (Ps-)Hipp. Ref. 8.19; 10.25 (Heine, *Montanist Oracles*, num. 32; 33).

40 Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.18.2.

41 Contra the all too cautious evaluation of William Tabbernee, *Fake Prophecy and Polluted Sacraments: Ecclesiastical and Imperial Reactions to Montanism*, VCSup 84 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 75–76. See, however, Christian Badilita, *Métamorphoses de l'Antichrist chez les Pères de l'Église*, ThH 116 (Paris: Beauchesne, 2005), 235, who cautiously, but unfortunately without evidence, also accepts an antimontanistic initiative of Hippolytus. The assumption that the imminent expectation of the end by Hippolytus's opponents could be explained by a situation of current persecution does not go far enough; contra Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 60; and Katharina Bracht, "Logos parainetikos: der Danielkommentar des Hippolyt," in *Die Geschichte der Daniel-Auslegung in Judentum, Christentum und Islam: Studien zur Kommentierung des Danielbuches in Literatur und Kunst*, ed. Katharina Bracht and David S. du Toit, BZAW 371 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 79–97, here 88.

42 Cf. the detailed discussion of the question in Bonwetsch, *Studien*, 75–77, who also assumes that the polemic is caused by Montanist efforts to gain a foothold in Rome. That there were Montanists in Rome in Hippolytus's day is evident from Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.25.5–7 and 6.20.3, where Eusebius reports on a dialogue against Proclus, a "leader of the Phrygian sect" (Πρόκλῳ τῆς κατὰ Φρύγας προϊσταμένης γνώμης; *Hist. eccl.* 2.25.6), written by Gaius in Rome during the tenure of Zephyrinus (198–217 CE). That Hippolytus was close to the Montanists, or at least sympathized with them, is also evident from his *Capita contra Gaium*, in which he deals with arguments, some of which similarly appear in the *Commentary on Daniel* (see c. *Gaium* 6), against this antimontanistic writing of Gaius (received in seven fragments in the commentary on John's Apocalypse by Dionysius Bar-Salibi, in "Contra Gaium," in *Dionysius bar Šalibī: in apocalypsim, actus et epistulas catholicas*, ed. Jaroslav Sedláček, CSCO 53/18 (Paris: Poussielgue, 1909); Latin version: "Contra Gaium," in *Dionysius bar Šalibī: in apocalypsim, actus et epistulas catholicas*, ed. Jaroslav Sedláček, CSCO 60/20 (Rome: Luigi, 1910); German translation: "Contra Gaium,"

3.3.2 The Four Kingdoms of Daniel in Light of the New Testament as an Argument against End Time Calculations

Hippolytus is not only concerned with refuting this concrete phenomenon. Instead, beneath this concrete example, he perceives a fundamental, theological pattern that he clearly already recognizes in the New Testament. Therefore, he formulates the question of his opponents in the words of the Gospel of Matthew: “when will this be?” (πότε ταῦτα ἔσται; Matt 24:3; Hipp. *Dan.* IV.16.1) and refers to the fact that Jesus’s disciples similarly asked about the time of the parousia (*Dan.* IV.16.2f., 6 with reference to Matt 25:15). He also notes that the congregation in Thessalonica was disturbed by an imminent expectation of the end (*Dan.* IV.21.2 with reference to 2 Thess 2:1–9). Accordingly, Hippolytus uses New Testament passages in his argument to reject such efforts at concrete end time calculations, but specifically selects passages from the biblical book of Daniel.

First, Hippolytus cites Jesus’s call to vigilance concerning the unknown date of his second coming, taken from Matt 25:1–13; Matt 24:42–51; and Mark 13:33–37 (*Dan.* IV.16.2–5), and the rejection of such questions by the risen one (Acts 1:6–8; Hipp. *Dan.* IV.16.6). Hippolytus also refers to the signs that announce the parousia (*Dan.* IV.17.1, 6). In this first passage, he mentions the abomination of desolation, which will stand “in the holy place” and marks the beginning of the great tribulation that precedes the end (quotation from Matt 24:15–33; *Dan.* IV.17.4f.).⁴³ Thus, the sign prophesied by Jesus is understood by Hippolytus to be a chronological prerequisite. He argues that the parousia cannot yet take place because the abomination has not yet occurred (*Dan.* IV.17.7). For Hippolytus, the credibility of Jesus’s prophecy results from the observation that another one of his prophecies, specifically that of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 21:20), has already been fulfilled. Accordingly, one can also assume the same credibility of Jesus’s prophecy about the signs pertaining to his parousia (*Dan.* IV.17.3).⁴⁴

in *Hippolyt's kleinere exegetische und homiletische Schriften*, ed. Hans Achelis, trans. Friedrich Schulthess, GCS 1–2 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897), 239–47.

- 43 Hippolytus omits the explicit reference to the book of Daniel (Dan 9:27; 11:31), which Matthew includes. Matthew 24:15 says here, “as was spoken by the prophet Daniel” (τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Δανιήλ τοῦ προφήτου). In this passage, Hippolytus identifies the abomination with the Antichrist, see Hipp. *Dan.* IV.49.3.
- 44 Hippolytus has in mind the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple after a long siege and famine in the year 70 CE by the Romans under Titus. Hippolytus is not aware that Luke 21:20 is a *vaticinium ex eventu*, since the Gospel of Luke was written after 70 CE. With a skillful use of the mixed quotation from Luke 21:9–11 and Matt 24:6–8, 33, Hippolytus disproves the opposing argument, see Bracht, *Hippolyts Schrift*, 310–311.

As a second argument against end time calculations, Hippolytus quotes the passage from 2 Thess 2:1–9 (*Dan.* IV.21.1–3), in which Paul turns against a similar problem of an imminent expectation of the end like the one confronting Hippolytus's own congregation. Hippolytus takes up "the one who now restrains it" (ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἔως; *Dan.* IV.21.3 / 2 Thess 2:7) out of the series of events that, according to 2 Thess 2:3–10, still must occur before the parousia of Christ. He interprets this phrase in light of the fourth beast from Daniel 7, which he previously interpreted as the Roman Empire of his own time (*Dan.* IV.5.1). Only when the Roman Empire has perished, will the deceiver come, whom Christ will then destroy upon his return (*Dan.* IV.21.3).

Thus, Hippolytus uses Daniel's four kingdom schema as it is received by the New Testament authors to show that detailed calculations of the last days up to the year (*Dan.* IV.21.4), the day (*Dan.* IV.16.1), or the hour (*Dan.* IV.16.3) are illegitimate.

3.3.3 Calculations of the Present and the End Time

In order to locate his present age in the course of history presented within his pretext and at the same time to identify the future events still to come before the end time, Hippolytus draws on Daniel's vision of the four animals and the Son of Man (Hipp. *Dan.* IV.1.1–14.4; 24.7–9),⁴⁵ following the cursory interpretation given in the book of Daniel itself, and also on the vision of the ram and the male goat (Daniel 8; Hipp. *Dan.* IV.26.1–27.1)—although, according to Hippolytus's own statement, the latter vision only offers a repetition (*Dan.* IV.26.1).⁴⁶ His major aim is to thereby postpone the expectation of the parousia into the more distant future in contrast with his opponents who cherished an imminent expectation of the end and an interest in more detailed end time calculations.

Inspired by his pretext, Hippolytus first looks into the past, in which several kingdoms replaced each other (Hipp. *Dan.* IV.24.7). Of the three past world kingdoms—Babylon, Persia, and Greece, which in his opinion are symbolized by the first three animals from Daniel 7—he lists only the last two.⁴⁷ Here is when exact figures come into the discussion: the Persians ruled for 230 years and the Greeks for 300 years.⁴⁸ The fourth beast stands for the present kingdom,

45 Hippolytus's interpretation of Daniel 7 is interrupted by the excursus on the question of the legitimacy of end time calculations (*Dan.* IV.15.1–24.6).

46 See below at section entitled, "Hippolytus's Past, Present, and Future against the Background of the Four Kingdoms of Daniel."

47 See above at section entitled, "Hippolytus's Concept of Time and the End Time."

48 Cf. *Dan.* IV.3.4f.; IV.4.1, as well as the above section entitled, "The Four Kingdoms of Daniel in the Context of Daniel's Prophetic Acts."

specifically the Roman Empire. Hippolytus recognizes an increase in strength which he attributes to the duration of the respective world kingdoms: from Persia to Greece, there had been an increase in the duration of the kingdom from 230 to 300 years. Consequently, so he extrapolates, the contemporary Roman Empire must last longer, namely 500 years (cf. *Dan.* IV.23.3f.; 24.1). This implies that, from the time of Hippolytus, another 300 years will pass until the end of the Roman Empire.

For the still outstanding future, Hippolytus sketches the sequence of events that have to occur before Christ's parousia according to the prophecy of the book of Daniel (*Dan.* IV.24.9). It consists of four or five "stations." These include: (i) the disintegration of the Roman Empire at the end of its 500 year existence (cf. *Dan.* IV.12.4), (ii) the appearance of the Antichrist (*Dan.* IV.24.7), (iii) the persecution of the church (cf. *Dan.* 7:21), and (iv) the actual parousia, which will be connected with (v) the last judgment (*Dan.* IV.24.8). In his interpretation of Daniel 7–8, Hippolytus refrains from giving more precise dates or spans of time for the remaining stages of history. He makes it clear by the sequence of several important events of the last days alone that the parousia that follows lies in the distant future. With this location of his present age in the course of world history and with this sketch of the events to be expected in the future, Hippolytus makes it clear that an imminent expectation of the end, as represented by his opponents, is erroneous. Rather, he establishes for his readers a perspective of about 300 years that are still to pass before even the sequence of events that mark that the end time begins.

3.3.4 Hippolytus's Past, Present, and Future against the Background of the Four Kingdoms of Daniel

3.3.4.1 *Past*

Daniel's vision of the ram and the male goat (Daniel 8) provides Hippolytus with the opportunity to present the recent past around Antiochus IV Epiphanes in more detail (*Dan.* IV.26.1–28.1). He interprets the repetition of Daniel 8 in relation to Daniel 7 as a means of "the building up of the faithful" (πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν τῶν πιστευόντων; *Dan.* IV.26.1). That the first kingdom in world history, the Babylonian kingdom, does not appear in this vision is not mentioned by Hippolytus. Apparently, the absence of Babylon is irrelevant to him at this point.

In accordance with the interpretation given by the biblical text itself (*Dan.* 8:20–26), Hippolytus defines the ram as the king of Persia, Darius, and the male goat, or in particular the great horn between his eyes, as the king of the Greeks, Alexander (*Dan.* IV.26.2f.). The four horns that emerge after the great horn is smashed (*Dan.* 8:22) represent the four Diadochian kingdoms into

which Alexander's kingdom was divided after his death (*Dan.* iv.26.5f.). At this point, Hippolytus adds hardly anything new beyond the interpretation that is already contained within the book of Daniel itself. On the other hand, he details the note about the one strong horn that emerges from among the other horns (*Dan* 8:9) by supplementing the corresponding individual details from 1 Maccabees 1. With this, he makes it unmistakably clear that the one horn from *Dan* 8:9 stands for Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who cruelly suppressed the Jewish temple cult in Jerusalem (*Dan.* iv.26.6). In all this, Hippolytus aims to prove through scriptural evidence⁴⁹ that Daniel's visions and the associated prophecies of events that were still pending in Daniel's age (i.e., reserved for the future from Daniel's perspective) have actually been fulfilled in the meantime (*Dan.* iv.26.6; 27.1). According to Hippolytus, Daniel 8 does not contain any prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled from his vantage point.

3.3.4.2 *Present*

In his commentary on Daniel 7, Hippolytus devotes special attention to the interpretation of his present age. In so doing, he looks at the text of Daniel through "New Testament colored glasses" by reading the text of Daniel against the background of ideas gained from the New Testament.⁵⁰ He points out that the fourth beast—which in Daniel 7 is not associated with a particular species or genus of animal, but is only described as particularly terrifying and horrible—represents the Roman Empire (*Dan.* iv.5.1f.).⁵¹ According to Hippolytus, this can be determined on the basis of the destructive nature of the Roman Empire, which corresponds to the iron teeth of the beast and his way of trampling everything with his feet (*Dan.* iv.5.2). Additionally, he attributes the pretext's refrain from assigning the animal to a particular species to the peculiarities of the Roman Empire, which does not consist of people from a specific race or language. Rather, it is a gathering of people from all nations for the purpose of setting up an armed force (*Dan.* iv.8.1–7)—also here, Hippolytus's critical view of the Roman Empire becomes especially clear.

The Roman Empire draws its strength from the power of the devil, as Hippolytus states with an allusion to 2 Thess 2:9. In so doing, it apes the work of Christ (*Dan.* iv.9.2f.). Just as Christ, according to Matt 28:19, called together Christians from all peoples and languages, bearing in their hearts the new

49 Note the coordination of 1 Maccabees 1 in Hipp. *Dan.* iv.26.6 and *Dan* 8:15–27 in Hipp. *Dan.* iv.27.1.

50 Cf. the section above on "The Four Kingdoms of Daniel in Light of the New Testament as an Argument against End Time Calculations."

51 Cf. Hipp. *Antichr.* 28.33.

name, that is, the name of Christ (cf. Acts 2:17), so too the Roman Empire at the same time under the emperor Augustus and in the same way gathered together the best from all peoples and called them “Romans.” The aping, of course, is reversed. In the Roman Empire, the gathering of peoples is seen as the establishment of an armed force for the devastating, deadly war, whereas the Christians have won the battle for life, as the sign of victory on their foreheads shows, namely, “the trophy against death” (τὸ τρόπαιον τὸ κατὰ τοῦ θανάτου; *Dan.* IV.9.3).⁵²

The aping of Christ is actually a characteristic of the Antichrist, but his coming, according to *Dan.* IV.5.3, is still outstanding.⁵³ The logical bridge lies in the fact that the Roman Empire rules “in Satan’s power,” that is, belongs to the complex around the devil. It is, so to speak, a precursor of the kingdom of the Antichrist because only “when lawlessness multiplies in the world” (ἡνίκα πληθυνθῇ ἡ ἀνομία ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ) and the Roman kingdom declines, “then the end shall come upon them” (“τότε ἔξει” ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς “τὸ τέλος,” *Dan.* IV.6.4 with a citation of Matt 24:14).⁵⁴ But at present, the Roman Empire is “yet beginning to culminate” (*Dan.* IV.10.2). Hippolytus concludes from his pretext that no earthly kingdom will follow it.

52 In this passage, Hippolytus does not take note of the time span that must have elapsed between the census under Augustus mentioned in Luke 2:1–7 or the birth of Jesus, which according to him took place in the forty-second year of Augustus’s reign (cf. Hipp. *Dan.* IV.23.3), and the mission by the apostles according to the Great Commission in Matt 28:19, to which he alludes, if one starts from the historicity of these statements (Hipp. *Dan.* IV.9.2f.). For him, all this belongs to Christ’s first parousia. Thus, for Hippolytus, these details are important only for the fact that they happened and are not factored into his temporal extension of the second coming.

53 Cf. Hipp. *Antichr.* 6 on the aping of Christ by the Antichrist and *Antichr.* 29–36 on the negative view of Rome (*Antichr.* 36–38: Rome as the whore of Babylon).

54 See Bonwetsch, *Studien*, 47; McGinn, *Antichrist*, 61. According to Hipp. *Antichr.* 49, the Antichrist will restore the Roman Empire, which had previously fallen into ten parts. Also, in his later *Chronicon*, Hippolytus expresses his negative view, even “contempt” of the Roman Empire by adding a list of the Roman emperors only as an appendix. See Friedhelm Winkelmann, “Historiographie,” in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum: Sachwörterbuch zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit der antiken Welt*, ed. Ernst Dassmann (Stuttgart: Hiersemann 1991), 1:724–65, here 1:751. The short presentation by Per Beskow, *Rex Gloriarum: The Kingship of Christ in the Early Church* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1962), 176–77, unfortunately lacks the differentiation between the Roman Empire at Hippolytus’s time as forerunner of the anti-Christian empire and the Roman Empire restored by the Antichrist in the last days. Also, the formulation of Badilita, *Métamorphoses*, 253, that in Hippolytus the Roman Empire contains the future empire of the Antichrist *in nuce* does not account for the facts of the case.

3.3.4.3 *Future*

According to Hippolytus, the prophesied but still pending future of earthly events begins with the ten horns of the terrible animal, or the ten toes of the statue. They point typologically to serious changes in the political conditions—the disintegration of the Roman Empire (Dan 7:7 // Hipp. *Dan.* IV.5.3; 12.4; Dan 2:33 // Hipp. *Dan.* IV.7.5f.)—which indicates the beginning of the events of the last days. This in turn leads to the consummation of the world (cf. *Dan.* IV.5.1, 3). At this point, the parallelization of Daniel 7 and Daniel 2, which Hippolytus carries out, reaches its limits because the metaphors of the pretext diverge. In the fourth book of his *Commentary on Daniel*, Hippolytus follows the pretext which, according to the continuous citation of the biblical book of Daniel, brings Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 into view.⁵⁵

The small horn that appears among these horns stands for the Antichrist (Dan 7:8 // Hipp. *Dan.* IV.5.3, 12.4). The three horns that the small horn rips out stand for the fact that the Antichrist will remove three of the kings⁵⁶ in order to possess the entire kingdom for himself (*Dan.* IV.12.4). Hippolytus pursues this interpretation further, going beyond Daniel 7, but following 2 Thess 2:4 and Acts 13:12, 15, accepting the victory of the Antichrist over the other seven horns as well (*Dan.* IV.12.5) so that the Antichrist finally has dominion over the whole earth.

When he has achieved this autocracy due to his foreign policy success, he turns, so to speak, to domestic politics and persecutes the “saints” (i.e., the Christians or the church). This persecution will be universal in the sense that “all of them everywhere” would be persecuted, and would be based on the Antichrist’s claim to absolute authority and his desire to be glorified and worshipped by all like God (πάντας πανταχοῦ διώκειν, βουλόμενος ὑπὸ πάντων δοξάζεσθαι καὶ προσκυνεῖσθαι ὡς θεός; *Dan.* IV.12.5).

Finally, the one who is “like the Son of Man” stands for the Son of God who acts as judge (Dan 7:13 // Hipp. *Dan.* IV.10.2). At this point, by way of intertextual allusion, the parallel between the one who is “like a Son of Man” from Dan 7:13 and the stone from Dan 2:34–35 comes into play. The “Son of Man” (i.e., the Son of God as judge, Christ in his second coming) will remove all kingdoms of the world and, as Hippolytus expresses with words from Dan 2:35,

55 Therefore, he no longer explicitly mentions at this point the stone which, according to Dan 2:34, “was cut off, not by human hands” and which he had previously interpreted as Christ who transformed the world kingdoms and established the heavenly kingdoms of the saints (*Dan.* II.13.1–2). Instead, he continues with his commentary on Daniel 7 with the horns of the terrible beast.

56 These are specifically the kings of Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia, cf. Dan 11:43 and Hipp. *Dan.* IV.49.4.

“shall scatter them as chaff from the summer threshing floor” (διασπερεί αὐτάς ὥσει κονιορτὸν “ἀπὸ ἄλωνος θερινῆς;” *Dan.* IV.10.3).

For Hippolytus, the return of Christ and the judgment connected with it form the threshold between the earthly and eschatological. In a sense, they represent the last event of this world and at the same time the beginning of the “heavenly things” (*Dan.* IV.10.2). Therefore, Hippolytus speaks of the Son of Man from *Dan* 7:13 as “the first fruits of our resurrection” (ἀπαρχὴ τῆς ἡμετέρας ἀναστάσεως αὐτὸς γεννηθῆ; *Dan.* IV.11.3–5, quotation here from 11.5; cf. 1 Cor 15:23). The heavenly kingdom of the saints, on the other hand, or the kingdom of Christ, which he compares with the stone from *Dan* 2:34 (*Dan.* II.13.2), is no longer of this world.⁵⁷ With 2 Peter 3:9, Hippolytus assumes that Christ delays his parousia in order not to bring judgment before the time ordained by God the Father (*Dan.* IV.10.4). The time up until the occurrence of the events of the last days has not yet been fulfilled (*Dan.* IV.12.2)—this is a further sign that Christ’s parousia is not imminent.

Hippolytus provides this assessment of the future with a further point against his opponents’ imminent expectation of the end by emphasizing that Christians, with all certainty that the described events of the last days will occur sometime in the future, should pray that they will not occur during their lifetime (*Dan.* IV.5.4). The “great tribulation” (θλίψις ἡ μεγάλη), as he puts it using the wording of Matt 24:21, which belongs to the events of the last days, would present such an immense temptation to apostasy that there would be a danger that Christians would not obtain eternal life (*Dan.* IV.12.2). In this way, he characterizes Christ’s imminent parousia—the object of his Montanistic opponent’s hope—in a manner contrary to his opponents’ hopes and instead as an undesirable, threatening danger.

57 Hippolytus explicitly opposes a potential erroneous opinion that the kingdom given to the Son of Man according to *Dan* 7:13 by the “Ancient of Days,” whom he interprets as the Father of Christ (*Dan.* IV.11.2), is an earthly kingdom (*Dan.* IV.11.4). It is possible that Hippolytus turns against representatives of a chiliastically oriented Montanism here as well as in the whole fourth book of his *Commentary on Daniel*. He corrects the Chiliastic understanding of the future kingdom of Christ as an earthly kingdom on the basis of his interpretation of *Dan* 7:14, claiming instead that this kingdom is the eternal glory of Christ. Since Hippolytus corrects only this one element of the Chiliastic conception of the course of the world but takes a positive view of the remaining elements, particularly the assumption of a duration of the world of 6,000 years plus 1,000 years (*Dan.* IV.23.4–24.6), one cannot speak of a rejection but rather a modification of Chiliastic ideas in Hippolytus (cf. Stefan Heid, *Chiliasmus und Antichrist-Mythos: Eine frühchristliche Kontroverse um das Heilige Land*, Hereditas 6 [Bonn: Borengässer 1993], 127, 220; against Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity*, 2nd rev. and enl. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 161–65, 169).

4 Conclusion

The four kingdoms of Daniel with the subsequent eschatological kingdom of God are the biblical material from which Hippolytus develops his understanding of time and history. He arrives at his understanding through a typological interpretation that is guided by the New Testament's reception of the book of Daniel. The fact that Hippolytus orients himself to the book of Daniel, and even more, makes it the normative yardstick for his conception of history, is due to its canonical authority and the esteem in which it is held by Christians, an esteem that is bestowed upon it in part by its reception within the Synoptic Gospels. The character of *Commentary on Daniel* is determined by Hippolytus's attempt to overcome the difficulties of understanding the biblical book of Daniel caused by the temporal and cultural distance (which Jan Assmann, cited above, referred to as "the stretching of the communicative situation") between the biblical book of Daniel—which lies before him in the form of Theodotion's translation—and his Roman readership around 200 CE. His attempt to overcome these difficulties manifests itself in the lemma-commentary approach he takes within the commentary. The four kingdoms of Daniel, which appear in two places within the biblical book of Daniel (Daniel 2, 7–8), are relevant for a twofold reason. First, the interpretation of DanTh 2 primarily is of hermeneutical relevance since Hippolytus uses it to strengthen the authority of the pretext that is to be interpreted and the authority of the interpreter, that is his own authority as commentator. Second, with his interpretation of DanTh 7–8, Hippolytus assigns a pressing, contemporary relevance to the book of Daniel, especially to its schema of the four kingdoms with the kingdom of God following thereafter, by reacting to what were likely Montanistically shaped currents in his church that were marked by an imminent expectation of the end and by rejecting them with the combined authority of the divine revelation, the prophets gifted with the Spirit, and rigorous scholarly interpretation.

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