

Πίστις and Christ in Hippolytus's *De Christo et Antichristo*: A Response to Michael F. Bird and Michael R. Whittington*

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This article is a response to the recent work of Michael F. Bird and Michael R. Whittington, in which they argue that Hippolytus's *De Christo et Antichristo* provides a clear instance of a subjective genitive πίστις Χριστοῦ construction and unambiguously identifies πίστις as Jesus' death on the cross. However, in light of (1) a significant textual variant, and (2) the role that πίστις plays in Hippolytus's theology of martyrdom, the construction in fact supports the reading of an objective genitive.

Keywords: Pistis Christou, faith, genitive, Hippolytus

1. Introduction

In the Πίστις Χριστοῦ debate, Michael F. Bird and Michael R. Whittington (BW) recently claimed to have discovered 'overlooked evidence' for the subjective genitive position in Hippolytus of Rome (*De Antichristo* 61.26).¹ The most relevant portion of the Hippolytus text, as cited by BW,² is as follows (61.23–31):

²³[ὁ τύραννος]...διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν φεύγουσαν ἀπὸ πόλεως ²⁴εἰς πόλιν, καὶ ἐν ἐρημίᾳ κρυπτομένην ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσιν, ἔχουσαν μεθ'

* Thanks are owed to the *NTS* reader whose helpful critique greatly improved this work.

¹ 'The Faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Hippolytus's *De Christo et Antichristo*: Overlooked Patristic Evidence in the Πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate', *NTS* 55.4 (2009) 552–62. We will use 'Hippolytus' when referring to the author(s) of *De Christo et Antichristo* (see comments on authorship below). Also, in referring to *De Christo et Antichristo* we will use the shortened title *De Antichristo*.

594 ² We will assert below that the text cited by BW is inferior.

²⁵ἔαυτῆς οὐδὲν ἕτερον, εἰ μὴ τὰς δύο πτέρυγας τοῦ ἀετοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου,
²⁶τουτέστιν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πίστιν, ὃς ἐκτείνας τὰς ²⁷ἀγίας χεῖρας ἐν
ἀγίῳ ξύλῳ, ἤπλωσε δύο πτέρυγας, δεξιὰν καὶ εὐώνυμον
²⁸προσκαλούμενος πάντας τοὺς εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύοντας καὶ σκεπάζων
²⁹ὡς ὄρνις νεοσσούς· καὶ γὰρ διὰ Μαλαχίου φησὶν· καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς
³⁰φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά μου ἀνατελεῖ ἥλιος δικαιοσύνης, καὶ ἴασις ἐν
³¹ταῖς πτέρυξιν αὐτοῦ.'

BW assert that the evidence of this text is 'unambiguous' and 'certain', supporting not only a subjective reading of the πίστις Χριστοῦ construction, but also defining clearly the semantic content of πίστις as Jesus' specific act of obedience on the cross.³ BW are confident they have found a formidable early Church precedent for understanding Pauline texts in a like manner.

Our response is pointed, only engaging BW on their understanding of the Hippolytus text and not their broader discussion of Πίστις Χριστοῦ in the Fathers.⁴ Three items are treated: first, the authorship and date of *De Antichristo*; second, the manuscript tradition of *De Antichristo* 61; and third, πίστις in *Commentarium in Daniele* and *De Antichristo*.

2. Authorship and Date

Conclusions regarding the authorship and date of *De Antichristo* are not crucial for this rebuttal. Nevertheless, as will be suggested below, the close association between *Commentarium in Daniele* and *De Antichristo*, particularly with reference to the overlapping themes of persecution and martyrdom, indicates that the concept of πίστις as found in the Daniel commentary may provide insight into how the word was used in *De Antichristo*. Thus a few matters should be noted briefly.

The most prominent theories regarding the author of *De Antichristo* include that of Pierre Nautin, who advocated a two-author hypothesis for the Hippolytan corpus, attributing *De Antichristo* (and subsequently the *Commentarium in Daniele*) to an 'eastern Hippolytus' (c. 250 CE), while attributing other works (e.g. the *Refutatio*) to a slightly earlier figure, Josephus Romanus (d. 235 CE).⁵ Though Nautin's theory was not embraced entirely, years later scholars like Manlio Simonetti endorsed the concept of a corpus division, as well as the idea of an independent eastern Hippolytus as author of

3 'Overlooked Evidence', 552 and 559 respectively.

4 BW begin with a review of the recent shape of πίστις Χριστοῦ studies in the Church Fathers, treating mostly the studies of Roy A. Harrisville ('ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ: Witness of the Fathers', *NovT* 36/3 [1994] 233-41) and Ian Wallis (*The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995]).

5 See Pierre Nautin, *Hippolyte et Josipe: Contribution à l'Historie de la Littérature Chrétienne du Troisième Siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 1947) 97-103.

De Antichristo.⁶ Enrico Norelli favors a Roman provenance for the work, but has opted for a single author.⁷ Yet another theory is Allen Brent's, who proposed a two-author hypothesis for the corpus, but located both in Rome.⁸ Thus, the question of Hippolytan authorship remains a point of considerable dispute. The current response proceeds with this in mind.

Likewise, proposals concerning the date of *De Antichristo* vary, although not nearly as much as those related to its authorship. Nautin proposed a date of c. 250 CE for the work, as well as for the Daniel commentary.⁹ Simonetti, however, prefers a much earlier date (c. 200 CE).¹⁰ Cerrato, also favoring an early date (c. 202–3 CE), draws connections between *De Antichristo* and the persecution which occurred during the reign of Septimius Severus.¹¹ Cerrato argues persuasively based on the following: (1) the treatise antedates the closely related *Commentarium in Daniele*, which he believes the consensus of scholarship dates between c. 202 and 203; (2) the Severan persecution accounts for two primary themes found in the Daniel commentary (which are also found in *De Antichristo*), those being, endurance in spite of persecution and the expectation of the arrival of the antichrist; and (3) the witness of Jerome concerning Hippolytus's influence on Origen.¹²

While it is not our intention to adjudicate upon the debates surrounding the authorship and date of *De Antichristo*, a point of relevance for the current response centers on the relationship between it and the *Commentarium in Daniele*. With regard to authorship, most, if not all theories attribute the two works to the same pen and group them together, primarily due to the presence of shared themes.¹³ Similarly, scholars have closely linked their dates of

6 Manlio Simonetti, 'Due Note su Ippolito', *Ricerche su Ippolito* (ed. Manlio Simonetti et al.; SEA 30; Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1989) 121–6. See J. A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West: The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002) 3–123 for a thorough discussion on the authorship of the Hippolytan corpus (see esp. pp. 116–18 for his brief survey of the two-author hypothesis). Cerrato himself seems to side with Nautin's corpus division, and stresses the work's eastern character (see, e.g., p. 122).

7 See Enrico Norelli, *Ippolito, L'Anticristo. De Antichristo* (Biblioteca Patristica 10; Firenze: Nardini Editore, 1987) 28–31.

8 See Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) 297–9, 365–7. See also Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West*, 94–106 for a survey of the evidence in favor of a Roman provenance for the Hippolytan corpus.

9 Nautin, *Hippolyte et Josipe*, 100.

10 Simonetti, 'Due Note su Ippolito', 135–6.

11 Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West*, 154–5.

12 Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West*, 154.

13 See Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West*, 152 who offers the following evidence in support of an identical author for the two works: (1) reference is made to *De Antichristo* in *Dan* 4.7.1, (2) the main topics of the Daniel commentary correspond to those in *De*

composition, whether they are early or late (see notes 9, 10, and 11). Consequently, we proceed with the assumption that the semantic content of πίστις as found in the Daniel commentary may provide insight into how the word was used in *De Antichristo*.

3. The Text and Manuscript Tradition of *De Antichristo*

The chief failing of BW's work is its lack of any critical attention to the text and MS tradition of *De Antichristo*.¹⁴ This deficiency is noteworthy since a variant reading exists in the text that directly undermines their conclusions.

As BW themselves note, their text comes from the tenth volume of J. P. Migne's 1857 work, *Patrologia Graeca*,¹⁵ which was published at a time when the Hippolytan corpus was principally known through two Greek MS traditions, Ebroicensis (E) and Remensis (R).¹⁶ In 1873, however, a set of Greek MSS was discovered in Jerusalem by Philotheos Bryennios, which is now commonly known as codex Hierosolymitanus (H). The codex is most renowned for its preservation of several works from the Apostolic Fathers (e.g. 1–2 *Clement*, *Epistle of Barnabas*, *Didache*, and the long recension of Ignatius),¹⁷ but it also contained other documents from the patristic period. Included in these was Hippolytus's *De Antichristo*.

In 1897, Hans Achelis published his critical edition of *De Antichristo* in volume two of *Hippolytus Werke*,¹⁸ as well as in his *Hippolytstudien*. Thus for both volumes he was able to utilize H, calling it 'die Handschrift des griechischen Patriarchats zu Jerusalem', and dating the MS to the tenth century, at least five centuries earlier than either E or R. Achelis asserted, 'Dass der Text von De Antichristo durch die Jerusalemer Handschrift und durch die slavische Übersetzung auf ein anderes Fundament gesetzt ist, wird jedermann

Antichristo, (3) the two works are the same in their views on world history, eschatological history, the antichrist, and the use of biblical texts, and (4) the manuscripts of both works display the name Hippolytus. See also Allen, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church*, 159, 159 n. 158, 180.

14 Thanks are due to Dr. Bryan Litfin for his insights on patristic text-criticism.

15 Bird and Whinton, 'Overlooked Evidence', 559 n. 24.

16 See Hans Achelis, *Hippolytstudien* (Texte und Untersuchungen 16/4; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1897) 65–8 where he says E is, 'die Handschrift der Bibliothek zu Évreux in der Normandie', and dates it to the fifteenth century, while R is, 'die Handschrift der Bibliothek in Rheims, ehemals im Kloster St.-Remi deselbst', and dates it to the sixteenth century.

17 Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1 (LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2003) 3, 23.

18 Hans Achelis and Georg Bonwetsch, eds., *Hippolytus Werke, Exegetische und Homiletische Schriften* (2 vols.; GSC 1; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1897).

zugeben'.¹⁹ Therefore, BW fail to recognize that Achelis's work has made Migne's edition obsolete.²⁰

In light of the above, three further comments are needed. First, Achelis favored H as the most reliable MS for Hippolytus's *De Antichristo*, presumably due to its early date. He asserted, 'Beim Bibeltext der Apokalypse wenigstens, für den Hippolytus einer der ältesten Zeugen ist, ist es deutlich, dass H allein die gute Überlieferung bietet, E R und S "minderwertig sind",²¹ und dasselbe Resultat wird sich möglicherweise in noch weiteren Umfange bestätigen, als ich es in der Ausgabe zugegeben habe'.²² Second, and most important, the construction that BW have identified (based on E and R) has a variant reading in H, which Achelis has favored, and which is also reflected in the translation of S, the Old Slavonic version of the text dating from the twelfth to sixteenth centuries.²³ Instead of the reading of E R, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πίστιν, H has the unambiguously objective construction τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν πίστιν.²⁴ Third, the external

19 Achelis, *Hippolytstudien*, 71.

20 Admittedly, if one is to venture into Hippolytan studies, particularly concerning *De Antichristo*, one would want to include Norelli's more recent edition (*L'Anticristo*), although Norelli himself notes that the critical apparatus he uses is not his own but belongs to Achelis. Referring to collated MSS, ancient versions—translations—and a critical apparatus Norelli says, 'Sie assunta come base l'edizione critica pubblicata nel 1897 da Hans Achelis nel vol. I/2 della collezione Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte, pp. 3-47'. Norelli concurs with Achelis on the tenth-century dating of H: 'Il terzo, H, piu antico (10 sec.), fu usato per la prima volta da Achelis' (see Norelli, *L'Anticristo*, 54-5).

21 Here Achelis cites W. Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1896) 177.

22 Achelis, *Hippolytstudien*, 71. However, in 1899, Paul Wendland argued against Achelis's assertion that H was the best text for *De Antichristo*. Instead, he sought to attribute more significance to the witnesses of E R and S (see, for example, 'Die Textconstitution der Schrift Hippolyts Über den Antichrist', *Hermes* 34 [1899] 416-17 where he says 'Aus diesen Beispielen kann man ersehen, wie irrig Achelis Meinung ist, den Vorwurf H zu sehr bevorzugt zu haben könne man ihm nicht machen, ER und S seien minderwerthig, wie auch die Meinung, er habe sich mit Recht für die Constitution des Textes um die indirecte Überlieferung nicht bekümmert'). Yet Wendland's arguments do not bear heavily on this response for two reasons: (1) in spite of his thorough comparative analysis of the readings of E, R, S, and H, he fails to mention the variation of the construction identified by BW, and (2) Wendland's own genealogies (see pp. 413, 416), and especially his attempt to assign more weight to the readings of S, seem to further establish H as the original text. His genealogies suggest an early date for S, which thus provides an objective genitive reading with multiple witnesses from two separate MS traditions.

23 Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West*, 152.

24 Achelis, *Hippolytstudien*, 42. Bonwetsch rendered the reading of S 'an Jesu Christus'. Norelli follows Achelis, giving the Italian translation, '...cioe la fede in Cristo Gesù...' (*L'Anticristo*, 145). This way of speaking of faith in Christ (ἡ εἰς Χριστὸν πίστις) is common in the fathers (e.g. Clement of Alexandria *Strom* 4.21.134.31: ἡ γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν πίστις; Justin Martyr *Fragmenta operum deperditorum* 11.6: τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως; Irenaeus *Fragmenta operum deperditorum* 25.3: τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν πίστιν; Athanasius *Contra gentes*

evidence suggests that H contains the best reading. The reading that takes Christ as the object of faith not only has an earlier witness, but also enjoys multiple attestation from two separate MSS traditions: H and S, the latter of which may well be earlier than both E and R.²⁵ Fourth, regarding internal evidence, although the corpus is too small to draw statistically significant conclusions, the genitive subject of faith is always human, while the divine object is typically marked with εἰς or πρὸς.²⁶

One could, however, assert that the bare genitive reading of E R (Χριστοῦ πίστιν) should be considered original since it is both the shorter and the more difficult reading. Certainly scribal habit tends to add clarifying prepositions or prepositional phrases.²⁷ Yet even if the shorter reading of E R is the primary reading, at the very least, H S indicate that there were multiple early scribal traditions that read the genitive as designating Jesus as the object of πίστις.²⁸ In other words, the

1.17: τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν πίστιν; Origen *Cels. Prooemium* 6.6–7: τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως). Cf. also διὰ τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως which appears in Hippolytus, *Fragmenta in Proverbia* 54.6 and 67.3.

25 See Wendland, 'Textconstitution', 413, 416.

26 For the former see ἡ πίστις τῶν ἀγίων (*De Antichristo* 49.20), ἡ πίστις σου (*De Consummatione Mundi* 49.9 and *Dan* 2.37.5.3), τὴν ἑαυτῶν πίστιν (*Dan* 2.24.5.1), τὴν τούτου πίστιν (*Dan* 1.11.4.5 and 2.37.6.2), πίστιν ἡμῶν (*Dan* 2.23.2.3), πίστιν τοῦ λαοῦ (*De Benedictionibus Isaaci et Jacobi* 86.5), πίστιν παιδῶν (*Dan* 1.10.5bis.1). For the latter, see τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν πίστεως (*Fragmenta in Proverbia* 54.6 and 67.3), διὰ τῆς πίστεως εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης τῆς πρὸς τὸν θεόν (*Dan* 1.16.5.4), ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν πίστις (*Dan* 2.38.2.2), ἡ τούτου πίστις πρὸς τὸν θεόν (*Dan* 3.24.6.3), διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν (*Dan* 1.16.5.4), πίστεως τῆς πρὸς τὸν θεόν (*Dan* 3.22.3.6), τῆς εἰς θεὸν πίστεως (*Dan* 3.23.1.4), τῆ πίστει τῆ πρὸς τὸν θεόν (*Dan* 2.25.3.2), διὰ τῆς εἰς αὐτὸν ἀντελάβετο πίστεως (*Fragmenta in Psalmos* 29.5), τῆς πίστεως τῆς εἰς τὸν θεὸν γεγεννημένης (*Fragmenta in Psalmos* 7.15).

27 For example, restricting ourselves to NT letters, we find expansions that clarify syntax (Rom 5.2 [x¹ A add ἐν τῇ πίστει], 6.12 [C₃ Ψ Maj add ἐν], 1 Cor 12.13 [D² L add εἰς], Gal 3.1b [D F G Maj add ἐν ὑμῖν], Eph 1.6a [x² D F G Maj add ἐν ᾧ], Col 2.7a [x D² Maj add ἐν], Jas 1.26 [049 Maj add ἐν ὑμῖν], 1 Pet 3.18a [C^{2vid} L add ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, P⁷² A add ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν], 4.1a [x² A P Maj add ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν 69 1505 ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν], 2 Pet 1.3 [P⁷² B Maj replaces ἰδίᾳ δόξῃ with διὰ δόξης]) and those that support dogma (Rom 8.26 [x² C Ψ Maj add ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν], 8.34 [x^{*} A C add ἐκ νεκρῶν], Gal 3.17 [D F G Maj add εἰς Χριστὸν], 1 Pet 1.22a [P Maj add διὰ πνεύματος], Heb 9.28 [A P 0285 add διὰ πίστεως]).

28 Additionally, the linguistic data support reading this particular genitive construction as objective. A survey of the construction ἔχειν πίστιν + a genitive modifier in Hellenistic Greek, a form of which represents the πίστις Χριστοῦ construction found in E R (i.e. ἔχουσιν... Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πίστιν), will show that the combination of ἔχειν πίστιν consistently operates to disambiguate the function of the genitive, that being, to designate the object of the clausal unit. Examples are: Josephus, *Ant.* 19.16.1: ἄλλως τε ἐπειδὴ καὶ πολλὴν ἔχει πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ παραμυθίαν τοῖς ἐντύχαις κειμένους ('...because it has great belief in the God of power and great encouragement to those who happen to be

readings of H S decisively demonstrate that the genitive construction BW identify is not as unambiguously subjective as they claim.

4. Martyrdom, Persecution, and Πίστις in *Commentarium in Danielem* and in *De Antichristo* 61

In light of H's reading, here πίστις almost certainly does not carry the sense of 'faithfulness'. Rather, the reading suggests that πίστις has the sense of 'belief' or 'trust', with Christ Jesus as its object. To support this assertion it is worth briefly exploring the relationship between πίστις, persecution, and martyrdom, which is present in both *De Antichristo* and *Commentarium in Danielem*.

W. Brian Shelton has recently examined the martyrdom motif in Hippolytus's Daniel commentary, which as noted above, shares similar eschatological themes with *De Antichristo*.²⁹ Crucial for our rebuttal is one of Shelton's chief concerns: to demonstrate how Hippolytus interpreted and used biblical texts (especially Daniel) in a paraenetic fashion in order to encourage readers who faced significant persecution from the Roman government and the likelihood of dying for their faith. Thus, for Shelton, what Hippolytus has produced is a text possessed of a rich, pastorally developed theology of martyrdom, in which πίστις plays a key role.³⁰

For Hippolytus, particularly in the Daniel commentary, the threat of martyrdom can only be combated with an unshakable trust in God (πίστιν ... ἀμετάθετον καὶ φόβον θεοῦ ἀπαράβατον, *Dan* 1.10.bis5.1), which is the bedrock of a believer's perseverance despite persecution. In other words, while 'faith' and 'faithfulness' are intimately connected, there is a definite sense in which the former leads to the latter. For example, as Shelton has noted, Hippolytus, in seeking to justify the sovereign plan of God for his people, uses

laid with affliction...'); Hermas *Pastor* 43.9.2: ὅταν οὖν ἔλθῃ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἔχων τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ θεῖον εἰς συναγωγὴν ἀνδρῶν δικαίων τῶν ἐχόντων πίστιν θεοῦ πνεύματος ('Therefore, whenever a person should come to the synagogue who has the divine spirit of righteous men, who have faith in the divine spirit...'); and Plutarch *Fabius Maximus* 5.5.1: τῷ δ' ἡ μὲν κρίσις πίστιν ἔχοντι τοῦ συμφέροντος ἐν αὐτῇ βέβαιος εἰστήκει καὶ ἀμετάπτωτος ('But the decision, for the one who had confidence in a beneficial outcome [i.e. Fabius], stood consistent and unchangeable').

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

30 See Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis*, 79–112. Shelton does not specifically devote attention to the function and meaning of πίστις in the commentary; however, the frequent occurrence of 'faith' in Shelton's discussions as well as the texts he cites make it clear that πίστις and martyrdom were closely knit in Hippolytus's thinking (e.g. see *Martyrdom from Exegesis*, 80, 83, 88, 91, 92 n. 62).

Shadrach, Mischach, and Abednego as prime examples of trust in God. When they faced persecution, they were strengthened, not in an earthly way, but by faith in God (...ἐν δὲ τῇ πίστει τῇ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὑπερίσχυσαν οἱ τρεῖς παῖδες, *Dan* 2.25.3.2). The theme is elaborated further in 2.38.2–3:

Δεῖ οὖν ἐνορᾶν, ἀγαπητοί, πόσῃν χάριν παρέχει ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν πίστις. Ὡσπερ γὰρ αὐτὸν τὸν θεὸν ἐδόξασαν, ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θανάτῳ παραδόντες, οὕτως πάλιν καὶ αὐτοὶ, οὐ μόνον ὑπὸ θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐδοξάσθησαν καὶ τὰ ἀλλόφυλα καὶ βάρβαρα ἔθνη τὸν θεὸν σέβειν ἐδίδαξαν.³¹

Two points are worth noting. First, for Hippolytus, the pathway of martyrdom rests firmly on the foundation of the sovereignty and glory of God. In the divine plan, God allows his people to suffer and even die for their faith in order to glorify himself (τὸν θεὸν ἐδόξασαν) and his people (ὑπὸ θεοῦ... ἐδοξάσθησαν), as well as to bring nonbelievers to the fear of God (τὰ ἀλλόφυλα καὶ βάρβαρα ἔθνη τὸν θεὸν σέβειν ἐδίδαξαν). Each of these elements is what Hippolytus exhorts his readers to trust in, and what he calls χάρις. Second, this grace is brought about by 'faith in God' (ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν πίστις), which Hippolytus says was marvelously displayed in the biblical characters Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego (*Dan* 2.37.6–7).³² The three young men had faith in God that (1) he was able to rescue them, but (2) even if he did not, it was better for them to die rather than to sin. In the same way, Hippolytus exhorts his readers to approach the possibility of martyrdom with faith in God: God is able to deliver one from death if he wishes, but even if he does not, the reward for

31 'Therefore it is necessary to observe, beloved, how great a grace that faith in God affords. For just as they [Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego] glorified God himself by handing themselves over to death, so again indeed they themselves, not only by God, but also by the king, were glorified, and taught foreign and Barbarian nations to fear God'. Also, see Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis*, 96–101 for a discussion on the concept of 'theodicy' in Hippolytus. Similarly in *Dan* 2.37.5–6, again with reference to the story of Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego, martyrdom and faith are clearly linked, with trust in God leading to perseverance in the face of persecution: 'Ἐδραῖος οὖν γενοῦ, ὦ ἄνθρωπε, μήποτε τῇ πίστει βαμβαίνων, καὶ, ὅτ' ἂν κληθῆς εἰς μαρτύριον προθύμως ἐπάκουσον, ἵνα ἡ πίστις σου φανῇ· τυχὸν δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἐπείραζέν σε ὡς τὸν Ἀβραάμ, ἠνίκα ἤτησε τὸν Ἰσαάκ. Ἐάν σε προσενεχθέντα θελήσῃ ῥύσασθαι, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τὸν θεὸν δόξαζε. Μίμησαι καὶ σὺ τοὺς τρεῖς παῖδας καὶ τὴν τούτων πίστιν κατανόησον· εἶπαν γὰρ τῷ βασιλεῖ· Δυνατὸς ὁ θεὸς ἐξελέσθαι ἡμᾶς, ἐὰν δὲ μὴ βούληται, ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ θεοῦ ἐσμέν, ἡδέως ἀποθνήσκομεν ἢ ποιούμεν τὸ ὑπό σου προσεταγμένον. Shelton supports this when he says about this passage, 'Hippolytus stresses how the king ordered the fire to be heated sevenfold before throwing them in [sic] an effort to triumph in an earthly fashion, but it was by faith in God that the three young men triumphed' (*Martyrdom from Exegesis*, 94).

32 Cf. the very similar εἰ δὲ ἔνεκεν τῆς εἰς θεὸν πίστεως ἕτερόν τι ποιεῖν αὐτοὺς ἀναγκάζουσιν, ἡδέως ἀποθνήσκειν μᾶλλον ἢ ποιεῖν τὰ ὑπ' αὐτῶν κελευόμενα (*Dan* 3.23.1.4).

dying for him far outweighs the punishment for unbelief and apostasy. Whether one is delivered or not, triumph comes to the church by means of faith in God.³³

Πίστις in *De Antichristo* 61 appears to take the same meaning.³⁴ Surrounded by biblical allusions, especially to the book of Revelation,³⁵ the phrase occurs in the midst of Hippolytus's exposition on the advent of the antichrist, whose persecution of the church provides a situational context for the passage. After directly quoting Rev 12.13–14 (61.17–21), Hippolytus equates the woman, who is pursued by the dragon yet protected by 'the two wings of the great eagle' (αἱ δύο πτέρυγες τοῦ ἀετοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου), with the church who is pursued by 'the Tyrant', and forced to flee for her life (61.2–3, 23–24). Furthermore, like the woman, the church has also been given τὰς δύο πτέρυγας τοῦ ἀετοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου, in order that she might survive the Tyrant's attacks (61.24–25). However, Hippolytus diverges from the Revelation text when instead of focusing exclusively on 'the woman' (i.e. the church), he further identifies 'the great eagle' as Jesus, and states that the persecuted church has only its 'faith in Christ Jesus' to protect her. At his crucifixion, Jesus' hands were extended on the cross (ὁς ἐκτείνας τὰς ἀγίας χεῖρας ἐπὶ τῷ ξύλῳ ἤπλωσε δύο πτέρυγας), which Hippolytus interprets in light of Rev 12.14. For him, Jesus is both the crucified one and 'the great eagle', who by unfolding his wings (i.e. τὰς ἀγίας χεῖρας), not only summons 'all those who believe in him' (προσκαλούμενος πάντας τοὺς εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύοντας), but also protects those who gather under his wings by faith (σκεπάζων ὡς ὄρνις νεοσσούς). By alluding to Matt 23.37// Luke 13.34, Hippolytus connects Jesus 'the great eagle' in Revelation with Jesus the gathering hen in the Gospels, both of whom offer protection for believers.

The actions that are attributed to Jesus (extending his arms [61.26–27], and summoning and protecting those who believe in him [61.28–29]) are clearly linked to his crucifixion. But contra BW, these actions are not described here as Jesus' own πίστις; they are actions of Jesus as the metaphorical 'great eagle'. It is better to see τὰς δύο πτέρυγας τοῦ ἀετοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου in 61.25–26 as anticipating Jesus' act of ἐκτείνας τὰς ἀγίας χεῖρας in 61.26–27, and τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν

33 Shelton, *Martyrdom from Exegesis*, 98–9. In close association with this, Hippolytus can be found exhorting his readers to hope in what is to come in the afterlife by turning their eyes to God and the things of heaven (pp. 82, 92–6).

34 The word's occurrence in the reading of H as τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν πίστιν is similar to other fairly common syntactic structures that Hippolytus uses to discuss the πίστις word-group in its abstract sense, both in *De Antichristo* and the Daniel commentary. For example: *Dan* 1.16.4, 5 (οἱ τῷ θεῷ πιστεύοντες; τῆς πίστεως τῆς εἰς Χριστὸν); 2.38.2 (ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν πίστις); 3.22.3 (πίστεως τῆς πρὸς τὸν θεόν); 3.23.1 (τῆς εἰς θεὸν πίστεως); 3.24.6 (ἡ τούτου πίστις πρὸς τὸν θεόν); *De Antichristo* 6.14 (τοῖς εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύουσιν); 61.28 (τοὺς εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύοντας).

35 *De Antichristo* 61.2, 4, 5–6 cf. Rev 12.1; *De Antichristo* 61.7–8 cf. Rev 12.2; *De Antichristo* 61.10–11, 13–14 cf. Rev 12.5; *De Antichristo* 61.16–17 cf. Ps 110.1; *De Antichristo* 61.21–22 cf. Rev 12.6, 14; *De Antichristo* 61.29 cf. Matt 23.37//Luke 13.34; *De Antichristo* 61.29–31 cf. Mal 4.2.

Ἰησοῦν πίστιν in 61.26 as anticipating the summoning of πάντας τοὺς εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύοντας in 61.28.³⁶ In this sense, Hippolytus has gotten ahead of himself by mentioning faith at the point he does. Although at the start, it may seem that the eagle's wings are to be equated with the believer's faith, Hippolytus's following statements make it clear that the wings are in fact Jesus' own arms, with which he protects his believing brood. Believers are sheltered because they have responded in faith to Jesus' call and have come under his wings. The positioning of 'faith in Christ Jesus' in the appositional phrase seems to be Hippolytus's way of highlighting the fact that faith is the means by which the church survives the Tyrant's persecution. In the end, this reading of the text seems better to reflect Hippolytus's own theology of persecution and martyrdom, in which faith in God (here, 'faith in Christ Jesus') is what grants the believer the ability to triumph in spite of suffering.

5. Conclusion

This article has questioned the assertions made by Bird and Whinton, that new evidence has been discovered in Hippolytus that unambiguously supports the subjective πίστις Χριστοῦ position and directly equates Jesus' faithfulness with his obedient death. In response we assert, first, that BW have ignored (or were unaware of) a significant textual variant that speaks directly against their position. The variant, which reads τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν πίστιν, unambiguously marks Christ as object of faith. Second, BW have ignored the theology of faith and martyrdom found in *De Antichristo* (and in the Daniel commentary). In Hippolytus's work, particularly in the Daniel commentary, persecution can only be properly combated with an unshakable trust in God (πίστιν ... ἀμετάθετον καὶ φόβον θεοῦ ἀπαράβατον, *Dan* 1.10.bis.1). *De Antichristo* 60–61 contribute to this theology. Third, BW's work is almost devoid of a fuller linguistic examination that is necessary to demonstrate their assertion that the text is unambiguous. Consequently, fourth, an objective genitive reading was here proposed, which is more in keeping with typical Greek usage as well as with the understanding of the early Church as a whole.

36 Contra BW, who assert that this 'faith of Jesus Christ' is distinguished from a subsequent act of faith by those called to believe in him (πάντας τοὺς εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύοντας; Bird and Whinton, 'Overlooked Evidence', 558–9). BW's assertion is question begging: the veracity of their claim lies only in the assumption that Hippolytus is indeed employing a subjective genitive in the first phrase, which they have not proven.