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Timothy Gervais

THE FRAGMENTS OF HEGESIPPUS AND
ICLEMENET: SUCCESSION CRISIS, HERSEY,
AND APOSTASY

“Up to that period the Church had remained like a virgin pure and uncorrupted: for, if there were any persons who were disposed to tamper with the wholesome rule of the preaching of salvation, they still lurked in some dark place of concealment or other. But, when the sacred band of apostles had in various ways closed their lives, and that generation of men to whom it had been vouchsafed to listen to the Godlike Wisdom with their own ears had passed away, then did the confederacy of godless error take its rise through the treachery of false teachers, who, seeing that none of the apostles any longer survived, at length attempted with bare and uplifted head to oppose the preaching of the truth by preaching ‘knowledge falsely so called.’” -Eusebius¹

INTRODUCTION

Eusebius, in introducing his *Ecclesiastical History*, deemed it “an account of the successions of the holy apostles, as well as of the times

¹ This quotation of Eusebius is the Roberts-Donaldson translation of a paraphrase of Hegesippus found in *Ecclesiastical History* 3.32.7-8. See Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, Volume 8, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906), 146. All translations of Eusebius found in this work will be from the Arthur McGiffert translation unless otherwise noted. Arthur McGiffert, “Ecclesiastical History,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), 73-404.

which have elapsed from the days of our Savior to our own.”² Written circa 325 CE, *Ecclesiastical History* draws upon the works of Christian historians and apologists from the previous three centuries, and represents a veritable “storehouse” of fragments of Christian and pagan authors otherwise non-extant.³ While it is fortunate that the writings of Eusebius have preserved reference to, and quotations from, otherwise lost manuscripts, the unilateral nature of the preservation makes reliable reconstruction of the content and contexts of these works difficult at best, and more often nearly impossible.⁴ Perhaps no fragments preserved by Eusebius are more paradigmatic of this difficulty than those of the second century Christian apologist Hegesippus.

Little is known about Hegesippus or the general content and form of his original writings. His contribution to Christianity is only preserved by Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*, a brief mention by Jerome in his work *De Viris Illustribus*,⁵ and a fleeting reference in Photius’ *Bibliotheca*.⁶ Eusebius believed that he was “a convert from the Hebrews,”⁷ who lived “immediately after the apostles.”⁸ Additionally, Eusebius relates that Hegesippus’ purportedly wrote “five books. . . in a most simple style,”⁹ presumably a reference to his poor Greek, a fact from which Eusebius

² Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 1.1.1.

³ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology, Volume 3: The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature*, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1950), 331. See also: Sabrina Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors: His Citation Technique in an Apologetic Context*, (Boston, MA: Brill, 2006), 1.

⁴ For a discussion of the issues surrounding Eusebius as a historian see R.M. Grant, “The Case against Eusebius, or Did the Father of Church History Write History?,” in *Studia Patristica*, Volume 12, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975), 413-425.

⁵ St. Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, tran. Thomas P. Halton, (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 42.

⁶ Photius, *Bibliotheca*, trans. J.H. Freese, (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920), 232.

⁷ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.7.

⁸ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 2.23.3.

⁹ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.8.2.

probably inferred his Hebrew heritage.¹⁰ Eusebius' assumptions about Hegesippus' ethnic origins and temporal relationship to the apostles have been widely challenged in modern scholarship, most notably in William Tefler's classic essay.¹¹ Conservative inferences about Hegesippus now mark him instead as a "Palestinian Christian,"¹² and by his own admission he probably completed his work *Ἰστορικά*, or *Memoirs*, after the time that Eleutherus was elevated to the Roman bishopric, which occurred in 175 CE.¹³ Tefler places the completion of the *Memoirs* around 180 CE based on the *Chronicon Paschale*, a seventh century Greek-Christian chronicle which dates Hegesippus' death to the reign of Commodus.¹⁴ Realistically then, one would assume Hegesippus to have been born no earlier than the second decade of the second century, circa 110 CE.¹⁵

While acknowledging the complex issues regarding Eusebius' "fidelity to the text quoted,"¹⁶ no in depth investigation of the verbatim accuracy of Eusebius' quotations will be attempted here. Similarly, while it may well be the case that the texts quoted by Eusebius have been "exploited," "distorted," and "appropriated" to suit Eusebius' own theological, political, or personal aims,¹⁷ it will be assumed for the

¹⁰ Eusebius also viewed Hegesippus' knowledge of "the Syriac Gospel according to the Hebrews," and "the unwritten tradition of the Jews," as evidence of his Jewish descent. Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.7.

¹¹ William Tefler, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?," *Harvard Theological Review*, 53:2, (1960).

¹² Eric George Jay, "From presbyter-bishops to bishops and presbyters: Christian ministry in the second century; a survey," *Second Century: A Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 1.3 (Fall 1981), 150.

¹³ Tefler, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?," 145.

¹⁴ Tefler, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?," 145. Jonathan Bernier also places the date of composition in the "mid- to late 170s." Significantly, this places Hegesippus' nearly a century after many of the events he records, and suggests his work was predominantly a collection of traditions from the Christian past, not an eyewitness account. Jonathan Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus: On the Production of Christian Institutional Memory," *Theoforum*, 42 (2011), 40.

¹⁵ Joseph Tixeront, *A Handbook of Patrology* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1920), 77.

¹⁶ Inowlocki, *Eusebius*, 4.

¹⁷ Inowlocki, *Eusebius*, 1-9.

purposes of this work that “Eusebius’s merits... [generally] outweigh these defects.”¹⁸ Consequently, even if one reads Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* with a healthy degree of skepticism, a fair amount can still be reasonably inferred from the account about the content of Hegesippus’ five-volume work. A significant portion of the fragments preserved by Eusebius deal with the martyrdom of James, a tradition also recorded in *The Second Apocalypse of James*, Josephus’ *Antiquities*, and a non-extant work of Clement of Alexandria.¹⁹ Additionally, the work appears to have detailed the election of Symeon the son of Clopas as the second bishop of the Jerusalem church.²⁰ The subsequent martyrdom of Symeon seems to have occupied an additional section.²¹ Information regarding the church at Corinth during the period described in *I Clement* appears to have also been presented,²² as well as details of Hegesippus’ interaction with various episcopal figures met while traveling to Rome.²³ The curious Greek phrase used by Hegesippus stating that “I made for myself a succession up through Anicetus,” (διαδοχὴν ἐποιησάμην μέχρις Ἀνικίτου) seems to suggest the work may have also contained a now non-extant episcopal

¹⁸ Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius: The Church History*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), 17.

¹⁹ “James’ martyrdom as a follower of his brother is reported by Josephus, Hegesippus, and Clement of Alexandria. The latter two are no longer extant. However, fragments from their writings pertaining to the martyrdom of James are preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea. For Clement’s account, see *Hist. eccl.* 2.9.1-3. For Hegesippus’ account, see *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.3-19.” Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2010), 455. For a treatment on the relationship between these accounts see S. Kent Brown, “Jewish and Gnostic Elements in the Second Apocalypse of James,” *Novum Testamentum*, 17:3 (1975), 225-237. See also F. Stanley Jones, “The Martyrdom of James in Hegesippus, Clement of Alexandria, and Christian Apocrypha, Including Nag Hammadi: A Study of the Textual Relations,” *Society of Biblical Literature seminar papers*, 29:1 (1990), 323.

²⁰ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.11.1-2.

²¹ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.32.1-8.

²² Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.16.1.

²³ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.1.

succession list penned by Hegesippus' own hand.²⁴ While Jerome assumed the work was, "a coherent history of the Church from the passion of our Lord until the middle of the second century,"²⁵ and Robert M. Grant has argued that the *Memoirs* were, "a collection of legends about the apostles and their contemporaries,"²⁶ most modern reconstructions assert that it was an "apologetic," or "polemical," work intended to combat gnostic succession claims.²⁷ T. C. G. Thornton has argued that Hegesippus was, "the first Christian writer to make use of episcopal succession lists, using them in the context of arguments against heretics."²⁸ In considering the various extant fragments of Hegesippus' work it seems most likely that *Memoirs* was a collection of apologetic accounts dealing with the succession of bishops in those major Christian centers visited during his travels: Jerusalem, Corinth, and Rome.²⁹ At each stop in his journey Hegesippus likely investigated the "institutional memory," or oral history, of each congregation,³⁰ and compiled in writing either during his stay or later in Rome, not only a succession list, but also those stories most

²⁴ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4:22. Bernier has rightly noted the following regarding Hegesippus' phrasing: "It is perhaps not insignificant that Hegesippus uses ἐπισημῶν to describe how he obtained the succession list in Rome. This suggests something more than simply receiving an already existing list. One suspects a more active process, wherein Hegesippus spoke with members of the community in order to *produce* a succession list, much as EH 4.22.2 intimates he did in Corinth. That is, he does not so much report to us a list which he found already in existence, but rather produced one base upon the recollections of the Corinthian Christians." Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 44.

²⁵ Tixeront, *A Handbook of Patrology*, 77.

²⁶ Robert M. Grant, *Second Century Christianity: A Collection of Fragments*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 57.

²⁷ Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 79. See also Tefler, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?," 144. Tixeront, *A Handbook of Patrology*, 77.

²⁸ T. C. G. Thornton, "High-priestly succession in Jewish apologetics and Episcopal succession in Hegesippus," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 54:1 (April 2003), 162.

²⁹ Jay, "From presbyter-bishops to bishops and presbyters," 150-151.

³⁰ Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 38. See also Jay, "From presbyter-bishops to bishops and presbyters," 150-151.

pertinent to establishing the legitimacy of the current bishops. When the succession of bishops may have been in dispute (such as in Corinth) Hegesippus may have gathered and recounted information regarding the original debates and provided analysis of the situation to establish that the current bishop did in fact have legitimate claim to the episcopacy.³¹ These assertions stand against those of Tefler, who tends to minimize the historical content of Hegesippus' *Memoirs*.³² While the *historical reliability* of the accounts may certainly be questioned, the history-like nature of nearly all the extant fragments suggests the work was most plausibly an attempt to recount various events in the Christian past. The extant fragments of Hegesippus are too incomplete to provide sufficient evidence for Tefler's doubt.³³

This likely reconstruction of the contents of Hegesippus' *Memoirs* makes possible an identification of Thebouthis, an individual whom Hegesippus identifies as the originator of heresy in the early church, as perhaps a key contributor in the "attempted coup"³⁴ which occurred in Corinth and to which *I Clement* is a response. Contrary to the general trend of modern scholarship, I contend that Hegesippus as quoted by Eusebius does not suggest that Thebouthis resided in the Jerusalem church,³⁵ and as such Hegesippus may have encountered the story of

³¹ "We might suspect that Hegesippus, much disconcerted by [the] possibility [that the current bishop did not have a legitimate claim], investigated the matter and concluded to his satisfaction that the Corinthian church stood in the true doctrine until the time of Primus." Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 44. See also Jay, "From presbyter-bishops to bishops and presbyters," 150-151.

³² "The Memoranda must have been, for the most part, taken up with matters other than history." Tefler, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?," 144.

³³ "We cannot at all tell from all the stray fragments of Hegesippus' *Memoirs* that are before us what kind of a book these *Memoirs* were." Caspar Rene Gregory, "Canon and Text of the New Testament," in *The International Theological Library*, ed. Charles A. Briggs and Stewart D.F. Salmond (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 116-117.

³⁴ Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 44. See also Jay, "From presbyter-bishops to bishops and presbyters," 150-151.

³⁵ For scholars who hold this opinion see: Reinhard Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 11-13; and Robert M. Royalty, *The Origin of Heresy: A*

Thebouthis during his visit to the Corinthian congregation. Consequently, the account of Thebouthis given by Hegesippus and the content of *I Clement* may shed reciprocal light on each other, which allows for a more concrete reconstruction of the occasion of *I Clement* than previously assumed. Additionally, Hegesippus depicts the origin of heresy in the early church as intimately associated with a conflict surrounding episcopal succession, arguing that it was an intrinsic development that arose from Thebouthis' jealousy of the duly elected bishop. This portrayal is significantly different than other early Christian fathers, who often viewed heresy as a corruption of doctrine primarily derived from faulty scriptural exegesis.³⁶ The Thebouthis tradition may then represent an early Christian institutional memory, one that articulates the first schisms of the church as ones of succession crisis and individual apostasy, rather than the doctrinal corruption favored by later patristic heresiologists.³⁷

History of Discourse in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 9-11; and Birger A. Pearson, "Eusebius and Gnosticism," in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Detroit, MI: Wayne State Press, 1992), 301-302; and Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 43; and Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 85.

³⁶ "Irenaeus of Lyons, often considered the first systematic theologian... expos[ed] the errors in the beliefs of the Gnostics and demonstrate[d] that their heretical theology grows out of their (willful) misunderstanding of Scripture (see, e.g., *Against Heresies* IV.IIA)." Angela Russell Christman, "The Early Church," in *The Blackwell Companion to Catholicism*, ed. James J. Buckley, Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, and Trent Pomplun, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 45. Origen also considered heresy a derivative of corrupt scriptural exegesis. See Origen, *On first Principles*, tran. G.W. Butterworth, (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2013), 4.2.1.

³⁷ "For Hegesippus, it appears, 'heresy' does not represent an assault on apostolic authority or tradition. Instead, he underlines its institutional illegitimacy. His 'heretics' are characterized less by false teaching, which he does not describe, than by their resistance to the church's rightful leaders." Kendra Eshleman, *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire: Sophists, Philosophers, and Christians*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 224-226. See also James D.G. Dunn,

THE FRAGMENTS OF HEGESIPPUS

As mentioned above, a significant portion of the Hegesippean fragments preserved in Eusebius deal in some way with the succession of bishops in the Jerusalem church. Eusebius quotes Hegesippus at length in 2.23.3-19 detailing James' death by stoning at the hands of disgruntled Jews. After James' martyrdom circa 62 CE, and purportedly after Vespasian's siege of Jerusalem (which occurred eight years later in 70 CE), Hegesippus relates that "the apostles and disciples of the Lord that were still living came together from all directions with those that were related to the Lord according to the flesh (for the majority of them also were still alive) to take counsel as to who was worthy to succeed James."³⁸ Bauckham has rightly noted Hegesippus' somewhat flawed chronology of the election of James' successor. He states:

The fact that the election is dated after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is the result of Hegesippus' belief that the siege of the city began immediately after the death of James (*HE* 2:23:18). He or the tradition he followed would simply have assumed that the earliest practical opportunity for an election would be after the capture of the city. Thus we cannot suppose this dating to be accurate. If Symeon was in fact elected as successor to James, we must assume the appointment took place soon after the martyrdom of James in A.D. 62.³⁹

Other than the erroneous dating of the siege of Jerusalem, Hegesippus' depiction of the event seems otherwise plausible. Bauckham has noted that "a gathering like the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 is quite possible," given that "The status of Jerusalem as the mother church...had given James an

Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity (Christianity in the Making Volume 3; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 526-527.

³⁸ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.11.1.

³⁹ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 87.

authoritative position not only throughout the Palestinian church but even further afield (Gal 2:12; Acts 21:35; GThom 12).”⁴⁰

Eusebius relates the outcome of this apostolic council in two distinct passages: 3.11.1-2 and 4.22.4. Both references are relatively brief, with the longer of the two (3.1.1-2) being Eusebius’ own narrative of the event. The second, briefer passage, is located in the middle of a direct quotation of Hegesippus much later in the *Ecclesiastical History*, and significantly contains the only reference to Thebouthis found in the entire work. It is notable that during Eusebius’ primary narrative of both Symeon’s election and subsequent martyrdom, Thebouthis is nowhere mentioned. One would imagine that if Thebouthis was an important figure in the origin of heresy in the Jerusalem church, and was indeed Symeon’s primary opposition in the election to the Jerusalem episcopate, that Eusebius would have made reference to him in the main narrative sequences of Symeon’s election and/or martyrdom.

Instead, Thebouthis is only mentioned in a quotation of Hegesippus found in a portion of the *Ecclesiastical History* primarily devoted to early Christian churches other than Jerusalem.⁴¹ The relevant fragment reads as follows:

And after James the Just had suffered martyrdom, as the Lord had also on the same account, Symeon, the son of the Lord's uncle, Clopas, was appointed the next bishop. All proposed him as second bishop because he was a cousin of the Lord. Therefore, they called the Church a virgin, for it was not yet corrupted by vain discourses. But Thebouthis, because he was not made bishop, began to corrupt it.⁴²

⁴⁰ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 86.

⁴¹ The contents of Book 4 of the *Ecclesiastical History* largely deal with the churches at Alexandria, Rome, Corinth, Antioch, and Hierapolis. While there is a chapter devoted to “The Bishops of Jerusalem from the Age of Our Savior to the Period Under Consideration,” this section again depicts the succession of bishops in the Jerusalem church as a smooth process and fails to mention a controversy involving Thebouthis.

⁴² Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.*, 4.22

Despite the observation made by other scholars that the form and content of this passage appears “garbled,”⁴³ “mutilated,”⁴⁴ and also seems to contradict Hegesippus’ repeated assertion that heresy entered the church only after the death of the apostles and the kinsmen of Christ (which would include Symeon), scholars have nearly without exception taken the passage as evidence that Thebouthis participated in a dispute over the Jerusalem episcopacy.⁴⁵ However, several key features of the text make this assumption problematic.

While Hegesippus’ account clearly conveys the decision of the council, the relative chronology of events that transpired after the council is more difficult to ascertain. In particular, whether Hegesippus believed heresy arose immediately after the election of Symeon, as insinuated by the quotation above, or much later after his subsequent martyrdom is ambiguous.⁴⁶ Eusebius relates in two separate places Hegesippus’ assertion that the church was a “virgin,” because it had yet to be corrupted by “vain discourses.”⁴⁷ The second instance is in paraphrase of what seems to be a much longer passage than the one quoted above, and definitively places the introduction of heresy into the church after the martyrdom of Symeon:

Symeon, son of Clopas, an uncle of the Lord, was informed against by the heretics...⁴⁸ And after being tortured for

⁴³ Pearson, “Eusebius and Gnosticism,” 301.

⁴⁴ Stanley Jerome Isser, *The Dositheans: A Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 11-15.

⁴⁵ Pummer, *Early Christian Authors*, 11-13; Royalty, *The Origin of Heresy*, 9-11. Bernier, “From Papias to Hegesippus,” 43. Pearson, “Eusebius and Gnosticism,” 301-302. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 85.

⁴⁶ “It is unclear whether Hegesippus thought that these errors had entered the church with the death of James or with that of Simeon.” Bernier, “From Papias to Hegesippus,” 43.

⁴⁷ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.32.7; 4.22.4.

⁴⁸ The Greek here says that Symeon was informed against “ὕπὸ τῶν αἰρέσεων” or “by the *factions*” or “*parties*.” While “heresy” and “heretics” are etymological derivatives of αἵρεσις, here the word denotes not

many days he suffered martyrdom, and all, including even the proconsul, marveled that, at the age of one hundred and twenty years, he could endure so much... In addition to these things the same man [Hegesippus], while recounting the events of that period, records that the Church up to that time had remained a pure and uncorrupted virgin, since, if there were any that attempted to corrupt the sound norm of the preaching of salvation, they lay until then concealed in obscure darkness. But when the sacred college of apostles had suffered death in various forms, and the generation of those that had been deemed worthy to hear the inspired wisdom with their own ears had passed away, then the league of godless error took its rise as a result of the folly of heretical teachers, who, because none of the apostles was still living, attempted henceforth, with a bold face, to proclaim, in opposition to the preaching of the truth, the 'knowledge which is falsely so-called.'⁴⁹

A central argument of Hegesippus' work appears to be that the Church "up to that time," (the martyrdom of Symeon,) had remained uncorrupted. It was only after, "the generation of those that had [heard] inspired wisdom with their own ears" had died, that heresy was then introduced into the church. It is significant to note Hegesippus described Symeon as, "one who saw and heard the Lord,"⁵⁰ leaving no doubt that Hegesippus viewed the sedition of Thebouthis as an event which occurred after the martyrdom of Symeon, not immediately following his election.

unorthodox Christians, but instead is most likely a reference to the "seven sects" (τῶν ἑπτὰ αἰρέσεων) which Hegesippus identifies among the Jews in 2.23.8 and 4.22.5-6. See Eshleman, *The Social World of Intellectuals*, 224-226.

⁴⁹ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.32.6-8.

⁵⁰ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.32.4.

Important to Hegesippus' notion of an uncorrupted church is that "all proposed...with one consent," to promote Symeon to the episcopacy.⁵¹ The unanimity of the appointment seems primarily related to Symeon's status as "a cousin, as they say, of the Saviour."⁵² Both the harmony of the election as depicted by Hegesippus and Symeon's relationship to Christ are significant, as each affects the plausibility of Thebouthis' disgruntlement at not being selected bishop of the Jerusalem church. Although the concordance of the election may be an idealized aspect of the account, Hegesippus utilizes it as evidence for his assertion that schism did not occur in the church until after, "the sacred college of apostles had suffered death in various forms."⁵³ Because Hegesippus records that all the living apostles attended the succession council and participated in electing Symeon, it is unlikely that Hegesippus would undermine his assertion that the church had "remained a pure and uncorrupted virgin" until the death of the apostles by elsewhere stating that Thebouthis *immediately* began to corrupt the church prior to their demise. To solve this conundrum Bauckham reads the "unexplained πάντες [all]" of 4.22.4 as a reference to the relatives of the Lord mentioned in 3.11 instead of a reference to the general church body. This allows Bauckham to downplay Hegesippus' emphasis on the cohesion of the church at large, and instead focus on the unanimity of Church leadership. Bauckham argues this, "shows that Symeon was appointed and Thebouthis rejected by all who had any authoritative relationship to the Lord, and so deprives Thebouthis' heresies of any possibility of apostolic legitimacy."⁵⁴ While it appears true that Hegesippus wishes to distance the views of Thebouthis from the authority figures of the church, his repeated emphasis on the unified and uncorrupted nature of the *entire* church seems to imply that this πάντες is more inclusive than only those who possessed an "authoritative relationship to the Lord." If indeed, as asserted by Bauckham, the election of Symeon can be thought to mirror the Jerusalem council recounted in Acts 15, one might assume πάντες would more fittingly describe "the whole church" (ὅλη τῆ ἐκκλησία),⁵⁵ and the ambiguity of the reference may instead be a product of Hegesippus' rudimentary command of the

⁵¹ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.11; 4.22

⁵² Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.11.2.

⁵³ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.32.7-8.

⁵⁴ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 85.

⁵⁵ Acts 15:22.

Greek language. As such, because it is more consistent with Hegesippus' apparent historical and theological project, priority should be given to the timetable which places heresy as entering the church after Symeon's martyrdom.

Hegesippus seems to have, "put great stock in the idea that, with the death of those who had known Jesus personally, so too, a powerful barrier against heresy and error had fallen."⁵⁶ Thus, as Bernier has also noted, Hegesippus viewed, "the episcopacy as curative to the flourishing of heresy."⁵⁷ While this conception of the bishop as protector of the faith is certainly not unique to Hegesippus, "It is possible that no one before Hegesippus had thought that they could provide evidence for the 'orthodoxy' of the current bishop, conceived now as a contemporary successor to an 'orthodox' lineage."⁵⁸ Illustrative of this point is a predecessor of Hegesippus, Ignatius of Antioch, who argued for the necessity of the Bishop. Bernier has observed:

More or less contemporary to Papias, Ignatius aggressively argues for the necessity not only of a monarchical bishop but also of complete submission thereto. However, Ignatius does not argue from succession as does Hegesippus. For Ignatius, the bishop is to be obeyed simply because he is the bishop and thus has the authority of Christ not because he stands at the current head of a chain of memory going back to one or more apostles. This might suggest that, contrary to Hegesippus' theory of institutional memory, the episcopal succession did not develop out of a need to transmit earwitness [sic] testimony, but rather developed on the basis of other needs, and only subsequently came to be a substitute for apostolic authority. This, in turn, could suggest that Hegesippus'

⁵⁶ Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 43.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 45.

contribution was precisely to provide warrant for this substitution.⁵⁹

Thornton has also noted a shift in early Christianity as bishops gradually assumed the mantle of successors to the apostles.⁶⁰ In essence, both Bernier and Thornton have interestingly observed the phenomenon by which Bishops gradually replaced the apostles as curators of the Church. While this work is far too brief to investigate this observation at length, it does appear significant that earlier defenders of the episcopacy rarely if ever felt the need to articulate the line of succession from the apostles, presumably because there was no dispute over such. Hegesippus, as a later writer viewing at least one instance of conflicted claims to the episcopacy (Corinth,) felt the need to argue for the validity of the current Bishop. However, by the time of Eusebius, the succession conflicts which may have occurred in various churches seem to have faded to the background. Halton has argued that Eusebius was far more reliant on Hegesippus than has traditionally been assumed, and yet, Eusebius' reference to the succession crisis surrounding Thebouthis is fleeting at best.⁶¹ Because of the fragmentary nature of Hegesippus, as well as the general paucity of information regarding the transition of Christianity from the first to the second centuries, there is a brief but notably undocumented time during which the succession of bishops was at least partially in dispute. If Hegesippus' writings detailed instances of disputed episcopal claims, as is insinuated by Eusebius in 3.16, it would come as no surprise that Hegesippus' work may not have achieved widespread circulation. Ramsay MacMullen has stated that it was not uncommon during the era for, "Hostile writings and discarded views [to] not [be] recopied or passed on ... matters discreditable to the faith were to be consigned to silence."⁶² While MacMullen perhaps overstates the frequency and the intentionality of such practices, it is certainly plausible that the somewhat challenging

⁵⁹ Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 45.

⁶⁰ Thornton, "High-priestly succession," 162-163.

⁶¹ T. Halton, "Hegesippus in Eusebius," in *Studia Patristica*, 17, (Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1982), 688-693. See also J. Edgar Bruns, "Philo Christianus: The Debris of Legend," *Harvard Theological Review*, 66 (1973), 144.

⁶² Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire: A.D 100-400*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 6.

nature of the content of Hegesippus' succession narratives may have made their transmission less of a priority to the early Church fathers, despite their value as a source of information for the late first and early second centuries of Christian development.

An additional challenge to associating Thebouthis with the Jerusalem church comes from the status that relatives of Jesus seem to have held in the first-century Palestinian churches. Hegesippus' account is strikingly fascinated with the "family of the Lord," or δεσποσινοι (kinsmen of Christ).⁶³ As noted above, Hegesippus depicts Symeon's election to the episcopate as being primarily a result of his relationship to Jesus.⁶⁴ Additionally, after conveying a story about, "the grandchildren of Jude, who is said to have been the Lord's brother according to the flesh,"⁶⁵ he states that they, "ruled the churches because they were witnesses and were also relatives of the Lord."⁶⁶ Bauckham has noted that "Both in Jerusalem and in Galilee, until the Bar Kokhba war, the family of Jesus – the *desposynoi* – were the most influential and respected leaders of Jewish Christianity, at first along with members of the twelve, later more exclusively."⁶⁷ While not conclusive, the preferential authoritative status relatives of the Lord seem to have received in the Palestinian churches make it unlikely that Thebouthis would have had any claim to the Jerusalem bishopric while a cousin of Jesus was still living. Indeed, Tefler has noted that the account of the election of Symeon's successor from among "the thousands" rather than from the δεσποσινοι emphasizes that such an outcome was *only* because the kinsmen of Christ had unfortunately died out.⁶⁸ It is thus improbable, although not impossible,

⁶³ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.20.1.

⁶⁴ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 87. Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.11.2.

⁶⁵ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.20.1-8.

⁶⁶ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.20.8.

⁶⁷ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 374.

⁶⁸ "H. E. iii. 35, which seems to continue this history, describes the successor to the martyred Symeon as being a Jew named Justus, chosen 'from among the thousands' of Judaeo-Christians. This expression suggests some disparagement, and regret for the ending of the succession of *desposynoi*. This rings of a time when the continuance of that succession was a serious issue for Judaeo-Christians, a time that can

that Hegesippus' depiction of Thebouthis' envy of the episcopate and subsequent corruption of the church took place in the Jerusalem Church.

THEBOUTHIS AND THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

The second reference in the *Ecclesiastical History* to the martyrdom of James and the election of Symeon beginning at 4.22.4 appears to be a condensed summary of events Hegesippus conveyed elsewhere in his original narrative. Eusebius directly quotes a lengthy passage that more fully details the martyrdom of James in 2.23.3-19, and his paraphrase of Symeon's election in 3.11.1-2 also seems to point to a larger narrative.⁶⁹ Additionally, up until this point, Eusebius appears to be following a chronological structure within Hegesippus' own account as he quotes in order the martyrdom of James,⁷⁰ the election of Symeon,⁷¹ Symeon's martyrdom,⁷² and Hegesippus' arrival in Rome.⁷³ This is consistent with a picture of Eusebius systematically working his way through Hegesippus' account and conveying information as he encountered it.⁷⁴ Bauckham has noted that "Even where he paraphrases or summarizes Hegesippus, he follows Hegesippus quite closely, as can be

hardly exceed the last years of Trajan and the first of Hadrian." Tefler, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?," 149.

⁶⁹ Most significantly, Eusebius notes "[Symeon] was a cousin...of the Saviour. For Hegesippus records that Clopas was a brother of Joseph." As this information is not contained in the shorter quotation preceding the introduction of Thebouthis, it is unlikely that such represents the main narrative sequence of the account in Hegesippus' original work.

Additionally, if the direct quotation of Hegesippus at 4.22.4 did in fact represent the main narrative of the event, Eusebius' paraphrases in 3.11.1-2 and 3.32.7-8 would contain several instances of information that Eusebius would have manufactured wholesale. While it is possible Eusebius expanded on the information presented by Hegesippus, in this context it does not seem likely.

⁷⁰ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 2.23.3-19.

⁷¹ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.11.1-2.

⁷² Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.32.1-8.

⁷³ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.11.7.

⁷⁴ This seems implied by Eusebius' own narrative. Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.7.

seen in cases where the same passage is both quoted and paraphrastically reported (*HE* 3:20:1 || 3:19; 3:32:6a || 3:20:6; 3:32:6b || 3:32:2).⁷⁵ It would thus seem counterintuitive for Eusebius, who up to this point seems to have followed Hegesippus' account closely in something resembling chronological order, to then conclude his citation of Hegesippus with a return to previously covered material. While many scholars have noted this oddity, their identification of Thebouthis with the Jerusalem church has prevented the proposal of a satisfactory answer. Most agree with Bauckham that in Hegesippus' work, "the history of the Palestinian church after the death of James was not presented in a single chronological sequence,"⁷⁶ and thus Eusebius' quotation of out of sequence material here is indicative of Hegesippus' own "helter-skelter" account. This, however, is to assume too much about the original contents of the *Memoirs*. An alternative readily presents itself when considering the passage in light of the surrounding quotations. Most significantly, Eusebius has just completed a citation of Hegesippus regarding Clement's epistle to the Corinthians. The pertinent sections read as follows:

In [the *Memoirs*, Hegesippus] states that on a journey to Rome he met a great many bishops, and that he received the same doctrine from all. It is fitting to hear what he says after making some remarks about the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. His words are as follows: "And the church of Corinth continued in the true faith until Primus was bishop in Corinth. I conversed with them on my way to Rome, and abode with the Corinthians many days, during which we were mutually refreshed in the true doctrine."⁷⁷

Eusebius continues by stating that the same author, "also describes the beginnings of the heresies which arose in his time,"⁷⁸ at which point he quotes Hegesippus detailing a short account of James' martyrdom, a short account of Symeon's election, and then the singular mention of Thebouthis. As has been established previously, one of Hegesippus' primary historical projects is to establish that heresy only entered the

⁷⁵ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 80.

⁷⁶ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 81.

⁷⁷ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.1-2.

⁷⁸ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.4.

church after the death of the apostles and others who had interacted with the living Jesus. As such, if Hegesippus' account had moved to the locale of Corinth, it would be logical for him to reference the death of James and election of Symeon to establish for the reader a relative chronology to those accounts previously mentioned. These references can then be viewed as a stylized literary device designed to signal to the reader the relative temporal relationship of the following events to those previously recorded. This construal is consistent with the observation made by Bernier that Hegesippus seems intent on, "synchronizing the histories of the local Christian communities, or, to put this in a way perhaps more faithful to his basic ecclesiological vision, synchronizing the history of the Great Church as it existed in Rome with the history of the Great Church as it existed in Corinth."⁷⁹ While I agree with Bernier's assessment that Hegesippus' wishes to synchronize the local histories with that of the "Great Church," it seems more appropriate to say the synchronization was relative to the "Great Church of Jerusalem," as its succession history is utilized most often by Hegesippus to establish the relative chronologies of other churches. Bauckham too has argued that this condensed version of James' death functions as a relative date marker, although he views it as an insertion by Eusebius, rather than a part of Hegesippus' original quotation.⁸⁰ However, there is no obvious reason to doubt the authenticity of Eusebius' claim that the text represents a direct quotation, thus rendering Bauckham's assertion merely conjectural.

There are additional allusions in Eusebius' work that strengthen the correlation between Thebouthis and the Corinthian church. Eusebius notes that Hegesippus' *Memoirs* shared overlapping content with a now

⁷⁹ Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 41. See also John Chapman, "Hegesippus," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia: Volume 7* (New York, NY: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), 195.

⁸⁰ "Although the second of these passages purports to be a direct quotation from Hegesippus, it must in fact be regarded as a highly condensed quotation of material which Eusebius paraphrases in 3:II. In 4:22:4 Eusebius is not interested in giving an account of the appointment of Symeon for its own sake (having already recorded it in its chronological place in book 3), but needs to refer to it in order to date the account which follows, in direct quotation from Hegesippus, of Thebouthis and the origin of heresy (4:22:4b-6)." Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 83.

non-extant work of Clement of Rome, the traditional author of *I Clement*.⁸¹ Additionally, at 3.16.1 Eusebius makes the significant statement that:

There is extant an epistle of this Clement which is acknowledged to be genuine and is of considerable length and of remarkable merit. He wrote it in the name of the church of Rome to the church of Corinth, when a sedition had arisen in the latter church... And of the fact that a sedition did take place in the church of Corinth at the time referred to Hegesippus is a trustworthy witness.

Not only does Eusebius seem to view Hegesippus as a credible source for details on the Corinthian sedition, but he also states that Hegesippus even provided some amount of commentary on *I Clement* just prior to his introduction of the story of Thebouthis.⁸² Bernier too has noted the significance of these comments, although he does not identify Thebouthis with the sedition in Corinth.⁸³ He does however, see it as likely that Hegesippus compiled information regarding the Corinthian sedition, and that this material made up a significant portion of Hegesippus' text.⁸⁴ When taken in context, and while viewing the reference to James and Symeon as relative chronological markers, the identification of Thebouthis with the instigators mentioned in *I Clement* becomes an obvious possibility, if not a probability.

One potential argument against this proposed thesis must be discussed before turning more fully towards the text of *I Clement*. That is, that Hegesippus presents Thebouthis as being "from the seven sects," (ἀπὸ τῶν ἑπτὰ αἰρέσεων).⁸⁵ Presumably these are the same Jewish sects presented previously by Hegesippus.⁸⁶ If one were to take Hegesippus'

⁸¹ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 2.23.3, 19.

⁸² Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.1. See also Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 250, nt 219.

⁸³ Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 40-44.

⁸⁴ Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 44.

⁸⁵ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.5.

⁸⁶ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 2.23.8; 3.32.2.

assertion at face value, one might assume that Thebouthis would have resided in the Jerusalem church, where these Jewish sects are depicted as being most active. This however, would be a flawed assumption. Bernier has noted that Jews and Jewish Christians existed in communities throughout the Roman Empire,⁸⁷ and thus contact with any number of these sects would have been possible in most major cities. More importantly however, is the fact that Hegesippus' presentation of Thebouthis' relationship to the sects is "highly schematized,"⁸⁸ and the, "artificiality of the scheme is shown by the fact that Thebouthis is associated with all seven Jewish sects at the same time, and by the unclear nature of the connection between the Jewish sects and their Gnostic successors and Thebouthis."⁸⁹ Bauckham has argued that because of the obvious polemical nature of the account, its capacity to provide concrete historical data is severely limited.⁹⁰ Thebouthis' relationship to these Jewish sects was further called into question by a thesis proposed by Stanley Isser in 1976. Isser persuasively argued that Eusebius has misquoted Hegesippus, replacing the more ambiguous κακῶν (evil,) with the more specific αἰρέσεων (sect).⁹¹ Hegesippus' identification of Thebouthis with the seven Jewish sects then seems to be at best a conjectural reconstruction of heresy as a derivative of extrinsic and hostile Jewish factions, and certainly cannot be used to establish the geographical location of Thebouthis.⁹²

Because of the evidence presented, the identification of Thebouthis with the instigators in the Corinthian congregation seems plausible. As one of the oldest non-canonical Christian documents,⁹³ the succession crisis depicted in *I Clement* may have been one of the first to occur. As such, to suggest that Hegesippus believed heresy had its origins in a succession crisis instigated by Thebouthis in Corinth is highly consistent with the early dating of the succession crisis of *I Clement*. Perhaps more

⁸⁷ Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 40-41.

⁸⁸ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 89.

⁸⁹ James Carlton Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity*, (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 364.

⁹⁰ Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 90.

⁹¹ Isser, *The Dositheans*, 11-15.

⁹² Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 90.

⁹³ Andrew Gregory, "1 Clement: An Introduction," *Expository Times*, 117:6, (2006), 223.

striking however are the internal evidences of *1 Clement* that coincide well with the story of Thebouthis as it is presented by Hegesippus. Andrew Gregory has noted the following about the occasion of *1 Clement*:

The purpose of the letter and the occasion that gave rise to it are clearly stated, even if precise details are lacking. The church in Rome is aware of conflict in the church at Corinth, and writes to them in order that peace may be restored (1:1; 63:4; 65:1). Some younger men have deposed their elders (or presbyters) even though their conduct was honourable and blameless (3:3; 44:6) with the result that there is now factionalism and internal dissent (*stasis*) in the church, albeit at the instigation of only a few (47:6; 1:1).⁹⁴

Bernier too identifies the issues surrounding *1 Clement* as being related to a usurpation or “coup,” which has taken place in the Corinthian congregation.⁹⁵ While Bauer’s reading of *1 Clement* as “an anti-heretical missive” has been heavily criticized in light of his controversial “Bauer Thesis,”⁹⁶ his assertion that the letter is a response to a heretical outbreak corresponds well to the Hegesippean construal of heresy as a derivation of succession crisis.⁹⁷ The author of the epistle states that it is in response to, “a few headstrong and self-willed persons,” who have attempted

⁹⁴ Gregory, “1 Clement,” 223.

⁹⁵ “*1 Clement* speaks of conflict within the Corinthian Christian community. In particular *1 Clement* speaks of an attempted ‘coup’ at Corinth, wherein a group of upstarts sought to seize control from the rightful rulers (from Clement’s perspective) of the church.” Bernier, “From Papias to Hegesippus,” 44.

⁹⁶ Paul A. Hartog, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer Thesis*, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 47-51.

⁹⁷ Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, (Trans. Paul J. Achtemeier; 2nd ed.; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971), 95-129.

“detestable and unholy sedition.”⁹⁸ The author accuses this individual of possessing “abominable jealousy...concerning the priesthood,”⁹⁹ and that they “desir[ed] that they themselves should be exalted.”¹⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that Hegesippus suggests that Thebouthis corrupted the church because he was jealous that he himself had not been made bishop of the congregation.¹⁰¹ The author of *Clement* also suggests that this conflict had challenged the faith of those in the community in a way consistent with heresy: “Your division hath perverted many; it hath brought many to despair, many to doubting, and all of us to sorrow.”¹⁰² The author of *I Clement* argues that the mode of electing a bishop had been set previously by the apostles, and thus dispute over the office was inconsistent with the gospel.¹⁰³ The solution proposed by the author is that the perpetrator “retire” or “depart” from the congregation so as not to allow the strife to continue.¹⁰⁴ This solution is uniquely suited to solve a debate of succession, as without a competing authority the argument would effectively become obsolete. While a more thorough investigation of the text of *I Clement* is certainly warranted, it is unfortunately outside the purview of this article. However, initial observations suggest a reconstruction of the occasion of *I Clement* is highly consistent with an identification of Thebouthis with the usurpers of Corinth.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that the fragments of Hegesippus found in Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* may preserve a partial account of the succession crisis at Corinth to which *I Clement* is a response. Hegesippus’ depiction of the introduction of heresy into the “virgin” church is thus intimately tied to issues of succession and individual apostasy, rather than more traditional views surrounding scriptural exegesis and corrupt theology.

⁹⁸ *I Clement* 1:1. This and all following translations will be from the J.B. Lightfoot translation. See J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 2, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), 5-188.

⁹⁹ *I Clement* 14:1; 43:2.

¹⁰⁰ *I Clement* 39:1.

¹⁰¹ Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.5.

¹⁰² *I Clement* 46:9.

¹⁰³ *I Clement* 42:2-5; 44:1-4.

¹⁰⁴ *I Clement* 54:2.

Considering that Hegesippus' work is apologetic, reconstructions of his *Memoirs* ought to take seriously the suggestion that they may have contained additional narratives relating to succession crisis in the early Church.