

# Hegesippus and the beginnings of ecclesiastical historiography\*

By Chrysovalantis Kyriacou\*\*

## Hegesippus and the issue of the ecclesiastical historiography's beginnings

Around 160 AD it would have taken at least five days to sail from Kenchreai, one of Corinth's two ports, to that of Ostia, the gateway to the mighty and populous Rome. Coming from the East and staying for a time in Corinth, close to Bishop Primus (ca. 160), Hegesippus gazed upon Rome during the last days of Anicetus's (ca. 155-166) high priesthood/pontificate, a Syrian from Emesa who was to be martyred a few years later. A Greek-speaking immigrant and Christian among Christian Greek-speaking people coming from Asia in the heart of the Roman Empire, Hegesippus does not seem to have felt like a stranger. "*Graecam urbem*" – that's how Juvenal described Rome half a century earlier, noting ironically that Tiberius was where all the junk of the Syrian Orontes was poured. Hegesippus would remain in the imperial capital for some two decades. His death came at the beginning of Commodus's principatum (180-192), in 180<sup>1</sup>.

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1. For the days needed for the distance between Corinth and Rome to be covered, see: L. Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World*, Hakkert, Toronto 1974, p. 152. For Hegesippus's journeys, see: *Fragmente des Hegesippus* (hither *FrH*) 6 [Eusebius, *Ἐκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία* (hither *EI*), 4.22.1-3], in: E. Preuschen, *Antilegomena die Reste der aufserkanonischen Evangelien und urchristlichen Überlieferungen*, A. Töpelmann, Gieszen (1901) <sup>2</sup>1905, pp. 112-113. For Rome's Primus and, more generally, for the Church of Corinth, see D. Io. Pallas, «Κόρινθος» in: A. Martinos (ed.), *Θρησκευτική καὶ Ἱθική Ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία*, v.

According to his testimony, Hegesippus wrote in Rome the *Διαδοχή* [Succession] («ἐν Ῥώμῃ διαδοχὴν ἐποιήσάμην»), covering the question of episcopal succession “up to Anicetus”<sup>2</sup>. There is, however, a second work, the great value of which has been recognized by the relevant scholarship<sup>3</sup>. «Ἐν πέντε δ’ οὖν συγγράμμασιν», As Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260-ca. 339) notes, «οὗτος τὴν ἀπλανῆ παράδοσιν τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ κηρύγματος ἀπλουστάτη συντάξει γραφῆς ὑπομνηματισάμενος»<sup>4</sup>. The *Hypomnemata* [Memoranda], as this lost treatise is conventionally called, are known mainly through other sources: Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*, but also through lesser-known authors such as Philippos Siditis and Stephanos Govaros (the latter is quoted in Photios the Great’s *Library* [Myriobiblos]). Various attempts have been made to locate and classify the passages of Hegesippus, most notably those of T. Zahn (1900), E. Preuschen (1901, 1905), H. J. Lawlor (1912), and C. Antonelli

7, Athens 1965, p. 854; M. Fougias, *Ἱστορία τῆς Ἀποστολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας Κορίνθου*, Athens 1968; A. Kapsalis, «Κορίνθου μητρόπολη» in: Io. Floros (ed.), *Μεγάλη Ὁρθόδοξη Χριστιανικὴ Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια*, τ. 10, Stratigikes Publications, Athens 2013, p. 199; C. W. Concannon, *Assembling Early Christianity: Trade, Networks, and the Letters of Dionysios of Corinth*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017, pp. 21-22. For Rome’s Aniketus, see: *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715*, R. Davis (transl.-comm.), Liverpool University Press, Liverpool (1989) <sup>3</sup>2010, pp. xviii, 5, 92 (the dating of his high priesthood at 150-153 is considered incorrect); P. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the first two centuries*, M. Steinhauser (transl.), Fortress Press, Minneapolis MN 2003, p. 403. For Juvenal’s comments regarding the Greek-Anatolian community in Rome, see, *Saturae*, 3.61-65, <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/juvenal/3.shtml> [1.06.22]; Io. A. Panagiotopoulos, «Οἱ χριστιανικὲς κοινότητες τῶν Ἀνατολικῶν στὴ Ῥώμῃ τῶν πρώτων χριστιανικῶν αἰώνων: ἡ περὶ Πάσχα ἔριδα» in: A. N. Michalopoulos and Ch. Tsitsiou-Chelidoni (eds.), *Πολυπολιτισμικότητα στὴ Ῥώμῃ: κοινωνικὴ καὶ πνευματικὴ ζωή*, Democritus University of Thrace, Department of Greek Philology, Athens 2013, pp. 127-132. For Hegesippus’s time of death, see: *Chronicon Paschale*, B. G. Niebuhr (ed.), vol. I, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, Ed. Weber, Bonn 1832, pp. 489-490.

2. *FrH* 6 (*EI*, 4.22.1-3) in: Preuschen, *Antilegomena*, p. 113. For *Διαδοχή* as a separate work, which is mentioned at *ὑπομνήματα*, see A. Le Boulluec, *La notion d’hérésie dans la littérature grecque IIe-IIIe siècles*, t. I, Etudes Augustiniennes, Paris 1985, pp. 108, 197-199.

3. See, for example, P. K. Christou, «Ἡγήσιππος», *Θρησκευτικὴ καὶ Ἠθικὴ Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια*, v. 6, pp. 4-6; Christou, *Ἑλληνικὴ Πατρολογία*, τ. Β’, The Patriarchal Foundation for Patristic Studies, Thessaloniki 1978, pp. 654-657; St. G. Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία*, v. Α’, Athens 1990, pp. 284-286.

4. *FrH* 9 (*EI*, 4.8.1-2) in: Preuschen, *Antilegomena*, p. 113.

(2012). Although the text of Hegesippus does not show any particular variations from edition to edition, the consensus among scholars on the number of passages is not absolute: thus, for example, Zahn traces eight passages to Eusebius and one to Photius, while Lawlor includes possible passages from Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130-ca. 200) and Epiphanius of Constantia (367- 402)<sup>5</sup>. In the context of the present article, we rely on the less maximalist, compared to that of Lawlor's, edition of passages from Preuschen, putting in brackets the reference to Eusebius (EI). The following summarizes the main themes of the Hypomnemata, through the extant passages (*FrH*):

- *FrH* 1 (EI, 4.22.6). Hegesippus tells of the different religious trends ("various opinions" [«γνώμαι διάφοροι»] according to Hegesippus, "heresies" [«αἱρέσεις»] according to Eusebius) among the Jews (Essenes, Galilaeans, Masbotheans, Samaritans, Sadducees and Pharisees).

- *FrH* 2 (EI, 2.23.3-19). There is a description of the righteous life, trial, and martyrdom of James the Baptist by the Jews (62), which led, according to Hegesippus, to the siege of Jerusalem by Vespasian (70)<sup>6</sup>.

- *FrH* 3 (EI, 3.11-12 and 4.22.4-6). After James's death and the fall of Jerusalem, the question of electing his successor arose. The election of Simeon of Clopas, «ἀνεψιού [ἐξάδελφου=cousin], ὡς γέ φασι, γεγονότα

5. Th. Zahn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur*, t. VI. Teil: I-II, A. Dichert, Leipzig 1900, pp. 228-249; Preuschen, *Antilegomena*, pp. 107-113; H. J. Lawlor, *Eusebiana: Essays on the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1992, pp. 98-107; C. Antonelli, *Les fragments des Υπομνήματα d'Hégésippe: édition du texte, traduction, étude critique*, Thèse de doctorat, Université de Genève 2012.

6. The martyrdom of James took place in 62, when Nero (54-68) appointed L. Luceius Albinus (62-64) procurator of Judea, to succeed the deceased Porcius Festus (59-62). In the same year Sadducee Annan was appointed high priest by Herod Agrippa and, taking advantage of the power vacuum created by Albinus' non-arrival, he brought James and other Christians to trial, resulting in their sentencing to death by stoning. Therefore, the information given by Hegesippus, that the siege of Jerusalem began immediately after the martyrdom of James cannot be considered accurate. See Josephus, *Ιουδαϊκή Ἀρχαιολογία*, 20, 9, 197-204, <http://www.biblical.ie/page.php?fl=josephus/Antiquities/AJGk20> [11.07.22]; S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots. A study of the political factor in primitive Christianity*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1967, pp. 115-116; R. Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Community" in: O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik (eds.), *Jewish Believers in Jesus: the Early Centuries*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA 2007, p. 77.

τοῦ σωτῆρος», caused a schism on the part of Thebudas, “because he was not made a bishop”, («διὰ τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι αὐτὸν ἐπίσκοπον»). From this schism, the first seven heresies begin, which corrupt the Church’s virginity.

- *FrH 4* (*EI*, 3.19, 3.20.1-8; Philippus Sidites, 2.169<sup>7</sup>; *EI*, 3.32.5-7). Persecution of those belonging to the house of David by Domitian (81-96). The grandsons of Judas the Adelpothous are tried, interrogated, and dismissed with contempt («ὡς εὐτελῶν καταφρονήσαντα») by the emperor as manual laborers and law-abiding, with insignificant property, who expected a kingdom “not worldly, not earthly, but heavenly and angelic” («οὐ κοσμικὴ μὲν οὐδ’ ἐπίγειον, ἐπουράνιον δὲ καὶ ἀγγελικὴ»)⁸. There followed a period of peace for the Church until Trajan’s reign (98-117), during which Symeon (Simon) of Clopas⁹, was crucified at the age of one hundred and twenty years. Hegesippus regards the post-apostolic era as a period of the emergence of misguided heterodox teachers.

- *FrH 5* (*EI*, 3.32.1-4). Symeon of Clopas, second bishop of the Church of Jerusalem, is martyred. His arrest comes after accusations of heretics, who point him out to the Romans as “a member of the royal Jewish tribe” («τῆς βασιλικῆς Ἰουδαίων φυλῆς»).

- *FrH 6* (*EI*, 4.22.1-3). Eusebius refers to Hegesippus’s five volumes of *Hypomnemata* («ὕπομνήμασιν») τοῦ Ἡγησίππου. He also gives the information that Hegesippus «ὡς πλείστοις ἐπισκόποις συμμίξειεν

7. Philippus Sidetes was an ecclesiastical historian, who was active around 430. Vl. Io. Pheidias, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία*, v. A’, Athens (1992), ²1994, p. 50.

8. J. G. Cook judges Hegesippus’s testimony concerning the interrogation of the Lord’s relatives by Domitian as unreliable since Domitian never visited Palestine; J. G. Cook, *Roman attitudes toward the Christians from Claudius to Hadrian*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2010, p. 118 (note 40). The 39 plethra [jugera] of the landed property held by the sons of Judah were considered property of moderate size: G. Hamel, *Poverty and charity in Roman Palestine*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1990, pp. 155-156.

9. As Hegesippus notes, Symeon was executed by Consul Atticus; the latter’s identity remains uncertain. Some scholars identify him with Tib. Claudius Atticus, Herodes Atticus’s father, who governed Judea between 99/100 and 102/103: E. M. Smallwood, “Atticus, legate of Judaea under Trajan”, *The Journal of Roman Studies* 52, 1-2 (1962), pp. 131-133; T. D. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2010, p. 339 (note 22). Symeon’s great age possibly serves the need to fill a gap in the history of the Church of Jerusalem, a period during which the absence of information might have undermined the argument of unbroken continuity.

ἀποδημίαν στείλόμενος μέχρι Ῥώμης» (“as most of the bishops have joined together in sending a delegation as far as Rome”). His association with many bishops creates the context for receiving the same truthful teaching («τὴν αὐτὴν παρὰ πάντων παρείληφεν διδασκαλίαν») from Hegesippus. The latter, apart from being an eyewitness, is also familiar with Clement of Rome’s *Letter to the Corinthians* (88-99). In Corinth, where he stayed for many days on his way to Rome, Hegesippus encountered truthful teaching (ὀρθῶ λόγῳ) during Primus. In Rome, he wrote the *Diadochi* (*Succession*) during Anicetus’s bishopric. He met his successors, Soter (ca. 166-175) and Eleftherus (ca. 175-189)<sup>10</sup>. It seems that the *Diadochi* included other cities, not only Rome: «ἐν ἐκάστη δὲ διαδοχῇ καὶ ἐν ἐκάστη πόλει οὕτως ἔχει ὡς ὁ νόμος κηρύσσει καὶ οἱ προφῆται καὶ ὁ κύριος».

- FrH 7 (EI, 3.16). Hegesippus mentions Clement of Rome’s *First letter to the Corinthians* and its role in pacifying the conflict in Corinth<sup>11</sup>.

- FrH 8 (EI, 4.22.8-9). Eusebius states that Hegesippus knew the καθ’ Ἑβραίους εὐαγγέλιον and the Συριακόν, as well as other Jewish traditions, both written and oral. Like Ireneus, he especially appreciated *Solomon’s Proverbs* and wrote against those heretics who promoted the teachings through occultist works. Eusebius considers Hegesippus of Jewish descent, artificially focusing on Hegesippus’s self-perception and using the adjacent time to denote strong conviction: «ἐμφαίνων ἐξ Ἑβραίων ἑαυτὸν πεπιστευμέναι».

- FrH 9 (EI, 4.8.1-2). Eusebius reiterates that in the five volumes of the *Hypomnemata*, Hegesippus conveys the Church’s truthful teachings, even if his style is characterized by simplicity («ἀπλουστάτη συντάξει γραφῆς ὑπομνηματισάμενος»). It seems that the *Hypomnemata* were not only of an anti-heretical but also of an apologetic character since Eusebius states that Hegesippus wrote against the worship of idols. Here

10. Regarding the Roman bishops’ chronologies see: Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, *ibid.*, pp. 101, 394.

11. Concannon dates the crises in Corinth between 80 and 140: *Assembling Early Christianity*, p. 21. Most scholars date the Letter ca. 95. An earlier dating (ca. 70) has been proposed by T. J. Herron, *Clement and the Early Church of Rome: on the dating of Clement’s First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Emmaus Road Publishing, Steubenville, OH (1988) <sup>2</sup>2008.

is a small passage in which Hegesippus comments on the worship of Antinous by Hadrian (117-138)<sup>12</sup>.

- *FrH* 10 (Stephanus Gobarus, quoted by Photius, *Bibliotheca*, 232). Govaros, an anti-Chalcedonian theologian of the 6th century, is considered by Photius to be a tritheist. Although Govaros describes Hegesippus as «ἀρχαῖος τε ἀνὴρ καὶ ἀποστολικός», the criticism that Hegesippus is said by Govaros to have made of the Apostle Paul, concerning whether the righteous have the possibility of knowing the «ἡτοιμασμένων ἀγαθῶν» before death, is (μέντοι) rejected<sup>13</sup>.

Hegesippus attracted the historical research as early as the 19th century<sup>14</sup>. However, there is disagreement among scholars as to whether he should be regarded as one of the first -possibly the first- ecclesiastical historians. This question goes beyond the narrow context of the passages' ideological classification. The investigation of why and how he writes leads us to the question of understanding the Christian past and giving meaning to it by the educated believers of the mid-second century. Moreover, it puts under the microscope both Christian memory's intergenerational transmission and the latter's role in the formation of historical discourse by and about the Church.

12. Antinous's drowning of Antinous in the Nile (October 130) was followed by his apotheosis and worship. It is speculated that Hegesippus had personal experience of Adrian's apotheosis of Antinous; therefore, he was born before 130. He could have been Antinous's contemporary, i.e. to have been born ca. 110, so he would have been in his seventies when he died in 180. This seems likely, but cannot be substantiated; the cult of Antinous was also widespread after Hadrian's death. W. Telfer, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?", *Harvard Theological Review* 53, 2 (1960), pp. 145-146; M. Rizzi, "Hadrian and the Christians" in: Rizzi (ed.), *Hadrian and the Christians*, De Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2010, p. 11; D. J. DeVore, "Opening the Canon of Martyr Narratives: Pre-Decian Martyrdom Discourse and the *Hypomnemata* of Hegesippus", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 27, 4 (2019), pp. 586-587; J.-C. Eurell, "The *Hypomnemata* of Hegesippus", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 75 (2022), p. 150.

13. O. A. von Harnack, "The 'sic' et 'non' of Stephanus Gobarus", *Harvard Theological Review* 16, 3 (1923), pp. 205-234, dates Gobarus around the mid-sixth century and places him within the wider theological framework of the era.

14. Among the older studies, the following synthetic ones are worth mentioning: H. Dannreuther, *Du témoignage d'Hégésippe sur l'église chrétienne aux deux premiers siècles*, Berger-Levrault. Nancy 1878 and C. M. Allemand Lavigiere, *De Hegesippo*, Librairie Catholique de Perisse Frères, Paris 1950.



For Lawlor, one of the most systematic students of the fragments, *Hypomnemata*'s primary aim was not historical records but the defense of the faith against Gnosticism and the Gentiles<sup>15</sup>. W. Telfer questioned Eusebius's claim about Hegesippus's Jewish ancestry, and, therefore, Judeo-Christian traditions' reliability recorded in the *Hypomnemata*<sup>16</sup>. These positions were accepted by F. Stanley Jones, although he believed that Hegesippus is a relatively reliable source for Palestine's Judeo-Christian traditions, as they were received in the late second century<sup>17</sup>. C. Eurell has recently argued that the *Hypomnemata* were a loosely coherent anthology, containing traditions about the bishops and aimed at linking the concept of *succession* with the orthodox teaching<sup>18</sup>. Unlike Lawlor, N. Hyldahl recognized the presence of a main historiographical feature in the *Hypomnemata*: the chronological sequence of events. As to the genre that the treatise of Hegesippus belongs to, Hyldahl argued that the *ὑπομνήματα* was a distinct one, related to that of the «ἀπομνημονεύματα» ("memoirs")<sup>19</sup>. M. Durst rejected this view; according to him, the *memoirs* were not a literary genre but indicated in a general way an author's writings, comments or notes<sup>20</sup>. The relationship between memory and narrative was of interest to E. Norelli. For the Italian scholar, Hegesippus's preoccupation with the Christian past cannot be considered history. As in the case of Papias of Hierapolis (ca. 110-ca. 140), Hegesippus dealt with the origins of the Church because he was interested in fidelity to tradition over time and in dealing with heresies<sup>21</sup>.

15. Lawlor, *Eusebiana*, pp. 1-3.

16. Telfer, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?", pp. 143-153.

17. F. Stanley Jones, "Hegesippus as a source for the history of Jewish Christianity", in: S. C. Mimouni and F. Stanley Jones (eds.), *Le judéo-christianisme dans tous ses états*, Cerf, Paris 2001, pp. 201-212.

18. Eurell, "The *Hypomnemata* of Hegesippus", pp. 148-157.

19. N. Hyldahl, "Hegesipps *Hypomnemata*", *Studia Theologica-Nordic Journal of Theology* 14, 1 (1960), pp. 70-113 (especially, pp. 72-73, 80-81, 83-84).

20. M. Durst, „Hegesipps *Hypomnemata*: Titel oder Gattungbezeichnung? Untersuchungen zum literarischen Gebrauch von Hypomnema-Hypomnemata“, *Römische Quartalschrift* 84 (1989), pp. 299-330.

21. E. Norelli, «La mémoire des origines chrétiennes: Papias et Hégésippe chez Eusèbe» in: B. Pouderon and Y.-M. Duval (eds.), *L'historiographie de l'église des premiers siècles*, Beauchesne, Paris 2001, pp. 17-21. For Papias's dating: B. D. Ehrman, "Introduction:

Two of Antonelli's articles focus on the relationship between succession, orthodoxy, and memory. Antonelli put forward the argument of the "construction de la mémoire" («κατασκευῆς τῆς μνήμης») by Hegesippus, who sought to harmonize two models of Church governance: the more ancient model of succession by blood, in force in Jerusalem, and that of episcopal succession, developed in Corinth, Rome and elsewhere in the 2nd century, reflecting the succession system of philosophical schools. According to Antonelli, kinship by blood with the Lord was the main criterion of episcopal succession in the early stages of the Church of Jerusalem<sup>22</sup>. The concept of succession is closely linked to the work of Hegesippus and his reliability, especially concerning James, brother of Jesus. Thus, H. von Campenhausen rejected the James-related traditions as myths, emphasizing the succession of Christian teaching; on the contrary, E. Stauffer and A. Ehrhardt went so far as to speak of the "James's caliphate", attaching too much importance to the blood succession<sup>23</sup>. R. Bauckham and A. Brent strongly criticized the caliphate theory, with the latter linking the succession to the philosophical schools of the Greco-Roman world and the titular literary genre of the history of philosophy<sup>24</sup>.

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Fragments of Papias and Quadratus" in: Ehrman (ed.), *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. II, Loeb Classical Library-Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA – London 2003, p. 87. R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses. The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 2006, p. 14, places him between the late 1st century and the beginnings of 2nd century AD.

22. C. Antonelli, «Hégésippe chez Eusèbe. Histoire Ecclésiastique, IV, 21-22: Διαδοχή et origine des hérésies», *Apocrypha* 22 (2011), pp. 185-232; C. Antonelli, «La construction de la mémoire des 'origines' par Hégésippe chez Eusèbe à travers deux modèles en dialogue: Jérusalem et la famille de Jésus, Corinthe et Rome et ses apôtres et disciples» in: S. Buttica and E. Norelli (eds.), *Memory and Memories in Early Christianity*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2018, pp. 219-257.

23. H. von Campenhausen, „Der urchristliche Apostelbegriff“, *Studia Theologica* 1 (1947), pp. 96-120; Campenhausen, „Die Nachfolge des Jakobs“, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 63 (1952-1953), pp. 96-120; E. Stauffer, „Zum Kalifat des Jacobus“, *Zeitschrift für Religions und Geistesgeschichte* 4, 3 (1952), pp. 193-214; A. Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Succession in the first two centuries of the Church*, Lutterworth Press, London 1953, pp. 48, 82.

24. R. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, T&T Clark, London 1990, pp. 125-130; A. Brent, "Diogenes Laertius and the Apostolic Succession", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44, 3 (1993), pp. 367-389.



In this article, by taking into account the discrepancies concerning key aspects of Hegesippus's life and work, we will try to answer the following interrelated questions: (a) Does Hegesippus write history? (b) What is the main argument of his work? (c) And what is the relation of the narrative (historical or otherwise) to the memory of the Christian past?

### Hegesippus as a historian

For the ancient ecclesiastical writers, who lived much closer to the events and people we moderns look at from a distance, Hegesippus was considered an ecclesiastical historian. For example, such was Jerome's opinion (ca. 345-420): *subtextit historiam*, "composed history"<sup>25</sup>. Speaking of Hegesippus, to substantiate his own historiographical perspective, Eusebius consciously uses vocabulary that refers to historical records: *ἱστορεῖ* (FrH 1-3, 8), *τὰς ἀρχὰς ὑποτίθεται* (FrH 3), *πληρεστάτην μνήμην καταλέλοιπεν* (FrH 6)<sup>26</sup>.

We have already referred to Brent's view that Hegesippus's working method shows similarities with the historiography of the philosophical schools' succession, which flourished in the 2nd century AD<sup>27</sup>. To this direction also contributes A. Tropper's work on the influence of the historiography of the philosophical succession on ecclesiastical and rabbinic literature, in the context of the Second Sophistic intellectual movement. Tropper observes that Hegesippus – whose Jewish ancestry is supported by Eusebius, but rejected by Telfer – was the first Christian writer who seems to have systematically dealt with the history of succession, around the same time when the first *Ἀβώθ* (*Aboth*), –collections

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25. Hieronymus, *De Viris Illustribus*, 22, 8, in: K. Siamakis, *Τερωνόμου, De Viris Illustribus. Πηγές καὶ πρότυπα*, Thessaloniki 1992, pp. 178-179.

26. See Antonellis's articles mentioned above for Hegesippus's reception from Eusebius. A systematic exploration of Eusebius's presentation of Hegesippus, and the underlying reasons for it, remains outside the scope of this article.

27. See also J. Meyer, *Diogenes Laertius and his Hellenistic background*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden 1978, pp. 60-95.

of the rabbinic teachings— were formed<sup>28</sup>. S. J. D. Cohen explains that Josephus, following Hellenistic models and having apologetic purposes, sought to prove the antiquity and unbroken continuity of the Jewish tradition through the succession of priests and prophets. The same scholar considers that in the period after 70 AD and the destruction of Jerusalem, rabbinic education further took on the image of philosophical education<sup>29</sup>.

Hadrian's reign (117-138) –the Philhellene Roman Emperor– was fundamental in creating the public image of Christianity as a philosophical school. As M. Rizzi observes, philosophy and the model of philosophical life have become the norm among the upper classes under Hadrian<sup>30</sup>. Perhaps Hadrian began to form his conception of Christianity as a distinct philosophical trend after he conversed with Epictetus at

28. A. Tropper, "Tractate Avot and Early Christian Succession Lists" in: A. H. Becker and A. Yoshiko Reed (eds.), *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2003, pp. 161-188; Tropper, "The fate of Jewish historiography after the Bible: a new interpretation", *History and Theory* (2004), pp. 179-197. Γὰρ τὰ Κεφάλαια Πατέρων (Περὶ Ἀβώθ): A. P. Chastoupis, *Κεφάλαια Πατέρων*, Thessaloniki 1961.

29. S. J. D. Cohen, *The Significance of Yavneh and Other Essays in Jewish Hellenism*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2010, pp. 71-92, 534-547. Josephus and prophetic succession: L. H. Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus", *The Journal of Theological Studies* 41, 2 (1990), pp. 386-422; S. Mason, "Prophecy in Roman Judaea: Did Josephus Report the Failure of an 'Exact Succession of the Prophets' (Against Apion 1.41?)", *Journal of the Study of Judaism* 50 (2019), pp. 524-556. For the Anatolian peoples as "sages", see E. J. Bickerman's important article, "Origines Gentium", *Classical Philology* 47, 2 (1952), pp. 65-81 (especially pp. 74-75). Hecataeus of Abdera, who lived during Ptolemy I Soter's reign (305/304-282 BC), presents Egypt as a source of civilization and wisdom. *Hekataios von Abdera, Fragmenta* in: H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin 1903, pp. 480-488; O. Murray, "Hecataeus of Abdera and Pharaonic Kingship", *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 56 (1970), pp. 141-171. Scholars disagree whether the ethnographic information about Jews and Moses must be attributed to Hecataeus or another writer: F. R. Walton, "The Messenger of God in Hecataeus of Abdera", *Harvard Theological Review* 48 (1955), pp. 255-257; K. Berthelot, "Hecataeus of Abdera and Jewish 'misanthropy'", *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem* 19 (2008), pp. 1-10; B. Bar-Kochva, *The Image of the Jews in Greek Literature: The Hellenistic Period*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2010, pp. 90-135; C. Zamagni, «La tradition sur Moïse d'Hécatee d'Abdère d'après Diodore et Photius» in: Ph. Borgeaud, T. Römer, Y. Volokhine and D. Barbu (ed.), *Interprétations de Moïse: Égypte, Judée, Grèce et Rome*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2010, pp. 133-169.

30. Rizzi, "Hadrian and the Christians", p. 9.

Nicopolis in 112, during which the question of the Galilean attitude to martyrdom was raised<sup>31</sup>. Under Hadrian, the bringing of Christians to trial continued; nevertheless, the emperor's insistence that the trial procedure should be followed to the letter seems to have led to a limited number of martyrdoms<sup>32</sup>. KDuring his stay in Athens in 124/125 and 131/132, Hadrian may have cultivated a dialogue with the apologists Codratus and Aristides. At the same time, Hadrian attempted to reach out to the Jews, promising to rebuild the Temple and laying the foundations for the reconstruction of Jerusalem (117). However, the Panhellenic policy's implementation (131) and the Bar Kochba revolt outbreak (132) led to an aggressive Greco-Roman policy with a religious and cultural dimension<sup>33</sup>. But the die had been cast: Christianity was now surrounded by the philosophical garment<sup>34</sup>.

31. A. Galimberti, "Hadrian, Eleusis, and the beginnings of Christian apologetics" in: Rizzi (ed.), *Hadrian and the Christians*, p. 75. Galen (129-ca. 216) also received Christianity on philosophical terms: M. Sprengling, "Galen on the Christians", *The American Journal of Theology* 21, 1 (1917), pp. 94-109; Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, p. 274.

32. Cook, *Roman attitudes toward the Christians*, pp. 252-280.

33. Galimberti, "Hadrian, Eleusis, and the beginnings of Christian apologetics", pp. 71-83. For Hadrian and Jerusalem, see D. Golan, "Hadrian's decision to supplant 'Jerusalem' by 'Aelia Capitolina'", *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 35, 2 (1986), pp. 226-239; L. Capponi, "Hadrian in Jerusalem and Alexandria in 117", *Athenaeum* 98 (2010), pp. 489-501; S. Weksler-Bdolah, *Aelia Capitolina-Jerusalem in the Roman period in light of archaeological research*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2019, pp. 51-53. Ariston of Pella's Christian apology addressed to Hadrian is dated 134 AD: H. Tolley, "Ariston of Pella's Lost Apology for Christianity", *Hermes* 146 (2018), pp. 90-100. More generally, for the apologists see Papadopoulos, *Πατρολογία*, v. A', *ibid.*, pp. 115-116, 183-185. The creation of the *Panhellenion*, a coalition of Greek cities, loyal to Rome, reflects the different approaches to Greek identity in the years of the Second Sophistic. I. Romeo summarizes the essence of the debate in the question "*eugeneia* vs. *euglottia*": Are you born a Greek by birth or do you become one through education? I. Romeo, "The Panhellenion and Ethnic Identity in Hadrianic Greece", *Classical Philology* 97, 1 (2002), p. 31: "in the second century, the debate centers naturally on what it means to be Greek, or rather on the possible dominance of the cultural over natural considerations. One can be Greek by birth but also by education, thanks to the acquisition of *paideia*; this was expressed above all by the use of literary Atticism (*euglottia*), but also through the practice of traditionally Greek athletic and religious activities". Romeo points out the influence that the ideas of the philosopher Polemon, according to whom the "Greeks by birth" were superior to those having Greek education (pp. 34-37), seem to have had on Hadrian (pp. 34-37).

34. Cf. G. Kramanolis, *Ἡ φιλοσοφία τοῦ πρώτου χριστιανισμοῦ*, transl. X. Bamiatzoglou,

In mid-2nd century Rome, the apologist and later martyr (ca. 165) Justin practiced philosophy, founding his own school above the baths of Myrtinus. He taught there without asking for payment, while the place seems to have functioned as a house church<sup>35</sup>. Not coincidentally, Justin taught that the pre-existing Logos “served as an active and dynamic agent within pagan societies [since] he was present in every case of struggle or battle against demonic actions directed against God and ‘virtue’ [but also] in every human soul, so that it could distinguish between virtue and evil”<sup>36</sup>. Justin and the apologists were making room for those educated Gentiles attracted by the Christian line they advocated, but without departing from the essence of their own tradition. As D. J. DeVore suggests, Hegesippus’s description of James the brother of Jesus partly alludes to the Pythagorean model, with which he would have been acquainted, as they were an integral part of an educated community of Graeco-Roman origin<sup>37</sup>.

The Gnostics have catalytically contributed in the later coalescence of philosophy and Christianity. In the years of Bishop Hyginus (ca. 136-140), a philosophically educated Athenian, the Gnostic Valentinus arrived in Rome; he remained in the city until the time of the bishop [pope] Anicetus (ca. 155-166), probably coinciding with Hegesippus’s arrival<sup>38</sup>; Valentinus’s [c. AD 100-180] pupils Ptolemy and Heracleon (ca. 170) subsequently founded their own schools<sup>39</sup>. The Valentinians’ teachings quickly clashed with the prevailing church tradition, since

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Okto Publications, Athens 2017.

35. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, pp. 276, 278, 376-377; H. G. Snyder, “‘Above the bath of Myrtinus’: Justin Martyr’s ‘School’ in the city of Rome”, *Harvard Theological Review* 100, 3 (2007), pp. 335-362.

36. D. Trakatellis, *Χριστός ὁ προϋπάρχων Θεός. Ἡ Χριστολογία τῆς ταπεινώσεως καὶ τῆς ὑπερυψώσεως τοῦ Μάρτυρος Ἰουστίνου*, transl. Arch. N. Chtzinikolaou, Domos Publications, Athens 1992, p. 177.

37. DeVore, “Opening the Canon of Martyr Narratives”, pp. 579-609. For James as a model of Judeo-Christian asceticism, see J. Daniélou, *Ἡ θεολογία τοῦ Ἰουδαίῳ-χριστιανισμοῦ*, transl. Th. L. Drakopoulos, Apostoliki Diakonia tis Hellados Publications, Athens 2018, pp. 599-608.

38. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, p. 294. For Hyginus and his Athenian ancestry, see: *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis)*, p. 4.

39. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, pp. 296-297. Snyder, “Above the bath of Myrtinus...”, *ibid.*, p. 361, speculates that Justin’s school was geographically proximate to the Valentinian quarter in Rome.

they emphasized that the head of their school/church was Christ himself, without the mediation of third parties (apostles, elders, bishops). In particular, Ptolemy taught that the Valentinians were apostolic tradition's only valid successors<sup>40</sup>. It is therefore understandable that the need to emphasize the connection between Orthodox teaching and the apostolic succession against the claims of the Valentinians and other Gnostics<sup>41</sup>, becomes clear. Even before Hegesippus, Clement of Rome had already stressed the link between the Orthodox tradition and the succession in his *First Letter to the Corinthians*<sup>42</sup>. But Hegesippus, who lived in Rome during the period of Gnosticism's spread, made the concept of succession the focus of his historical writing, imitating Hellenistic and possibly Jewish models. Below we will examine the central historical-theological axis that runs through his work.

## Succession and Correct Doctrine

In Rome, Hegesippus wrote the *Διαδοχή*, which he mentions in his second book, the *Υπομνήματα*. It does not seem to have survived, while the *Hypomnemata* survives only in fragments, mainly incorporated in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*. From the first work's title and the second's surviving fragments, it is obvious that Hegesippus was particularly concerned both with the question of apostolic succession and with the

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40. *The Interpretation of Knowledge*, in: J. M. Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English. The definite translation of the Gnostic Scriptures*, transl. J. D. Turner, Harper San Francisco, San Francisco, CA (1978) <sup>3</sup>1988, p. 479.19.31-33; P. Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Valentinus' legacy and polyphony of voices*, Routledge, London – New York 2022, pp. 22, 25, 89-90. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, pp. 383-384, argues that the prevalence in Rome of the orthodox line, represented by Justin Martyr's theology of the Word/Logos, was largely the result of its acceptance by the majority of the city's Christians, who belonged mainly to the lower social strata, as opposed to the "elitist" Gnostics, who were in the minority.

41. S. Fitzgerald Johnson, "Lists, originality, and Christian time: Eusebius' historiography of succession" in: W. Pohl and V. Wieser (eds.), *Historiography and Identity I: Ancient and Early Christian Narratives of Community*, Brepols, Turnhout 2019, pp. 196-197.

42. Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie*, pp. 28-29; Brent, "Diogenes Laertius and the Apostolic Succession", pp. 387-388.

transmission of sound doctrine from generation to generation. Although A. Le Boulluec does not consider Hegesippus a church historian, he observes that he intended to record the correct doctrine's ecumenical spread and to present the Church as the true successor of the Jewish tradition<sup>43</sup>. K. Eshleman underlines the connection between *homodoxy* and *succession* within the context of the 2nd-century AD philosophical schools<sup>44</sup>.

In an important article on James's martyrdom, Bauckham comments on Hegesippus's (or on the Judeo-Christian source on which Hegesippus relies) way of working; he notes that our author is not interested in factual accuracy, but in the theological interpretation of what has happened. This could explain, for example, narrative details that seem at first sight paradoxical or inaccurate, such as that James was wearing a high priestly robe and was entering the Holy of Holies (*FrH* 4), or that his accusers attempted to kill him by throwing him from the Temple's parapet (*FrH* 2, 4). Using a well-established technique, Hegesippus weaves the image of James with metaphors inspired by the Old Testament, which are intertwined with the historical narrative to such an extent that they can be taken literally. According to Bauckham's reading, this means that is James's confession of faith: Jesus Christ is the gate of the eschatological temple, Israel's messianic king, the expected son of David (*FrH* 4)<sup>45</sup>.

O. Skarsaune, who accepts Hegesippus's Jewish origin, believes that he is writing to counter all those groups (Jews, Christians, and Gentiles) who doubted that Christ is the eschatological king, the Davidic Messiah, the person in whom the biblical prophecies were fulfilled. One of the correct teaching's characteristic features is that it accepts this position, which gives special importance to the blood ties with the Lord<sup>46</sup>. Davidic

43. Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie*, pp. 94-96, 109.

44. K. Eshleman, *The social world of intellectuals in the Roman Empire: sophists, philosophers, and Christians*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012, pp. 208-209 (cf. pp. 224-225, 247, with references to Hegesippus, that exaggerate the succession's institutional and not apostolic, according to the author, character).

45. R. Bauckham, "For what offence was James put to death?" in: B. Chilton and C. A. Evans (eds.), *James the Just and Christian Origins*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 1999, pp. 199-232.

46. O. Skarsaune, "Fragments of Jewish Christian literature quoted in some Greek and Latin Fathers" in: Skarsaune and Hvalvik (eds.), *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, pp. 338-348.



genealogy, deprived of any real political foundation and ‘eschatologised’, was at the heart of the theology of Palestine’s early Judeo-Christian Church<sup>47</sup>. R. A. Pritz in his reading of Epiphanius of Constantia<sup>48</sup>, points out that the early Christians were first called *Ναζωραῖοι*=*Nazarenes* (possibly from *naser* = “branch”)<sup>49</sup>; and then *Essenes* (*Ἰεσσαῖοι*), either by Jesse/Yishai, David’s father, or by Jesus Christ himself<sup>50</sup>.

We disagree with the position that Hegesippus understands or tries to harmonize two models of succession: that of the blood succession that was in force in Jerusalem (“James’s caliphate”) and the episcopal succession that was in force in Corinth, Rome, and elsewhere. Bauckham’s exhaustive study of the Lord’s kinsmen in the flesh, *desposynoi* (*δεσπόσυνοι*) rejects the caliphate theory based on the Kingdom’s eschatological character. Of course, he accepts the view that the *δεσπόσυνοι* enjoyed special honors, which brought them to the Church of Jerusalem’s primacy. According to the ancient Middle East’s customs and traditions, the relationship by blood with the ruler implied the inclusion of his relatives in the state’s government apparatus. However, in the *desposynoi*’s case, the blood relationship with Christ

47. For the eschatological dimension, see D. Janzen, *Chronicles and the politics of Davidic restoration: a quiet revolution*, Bloomsbury, London – New York 2017, p. 228. For the Davidic-Messianic expectations’ fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ, see M. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts. The promise and its fulfillment in Lukan Christology*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield 1995, pp. 337, 340-341; S. Despotis, *Ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὡς «Χριστός» καὶ ἡ πολιτικὴ ἐξουσία στοὺς συνοπτικοὺς εὐαγγελιστές*, Athos Publications, Athens 2005. The view of Jesus Christ’s admission by adoption into the house of David is supported by C. T. Friedeman, “Jesus’ Davidic lineage and the case for Jewish adoption”, *New Testament Studies* 66 (2020), pp. 249-267. Julius Africanus (ca. 225-ca. 250) preserves certain Christian traditions about the House of David and the Lord’s relatives: C. Guignard, “Jesus’ family and their genealogy according to the testimony of Julius Africanus” in: C. Clivaz, A. Dettwiler, L. Devillers and E. Norelli (eds.), *Infancy Gospels: Stories and Identities*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2011, 67-93, for more details, see Guignard, *La lettre de Julius Africanus à Aristide sur la généalogie du Christ*, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2011.

48. *Panarion* 29, 1, 3-9, 29, 4, 9.

49. Cf. *Isaiah* 11, 1: «καὶ ἐξελεύσεται ῥάβδος ἐκ τῆς ῥίζης Ἰεσσαί, καὶ ἄνθος ἐκ τῆς ῥίζης ἀναβήσεται».

50. R. A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity. From the end of the New Testament period until its disappearance in the fourth century*, Brill, Jerusalem – Leiden 1988, pp. 13-14, 113.

does not seem particularly prominent, in contrast to the vocation and apostolicity of their authority<sup>51</sup>. Moreover, the apostles' and elders' participation in the government of the Church of Jerusalem, with James as its head, is well documented<sup>52</sup>, even if Hegesippus seems, at first sight, to imply a “monarchical” type of succession, making Adelphotheus a model defender of sound doctrine and a martyr<sup>53</sup>. P. Lampe argues that in Rome, at least before Anicetus, the governance of the Church was in the hands of the elders, with a first elder bishop as *primus inter pares*. Starting from Hegesippus's time, the increase of the bishop of Rome's economic power and the need for his promotion as the bearer of the orthodox tradition against Gnosticism gradually led to the establishment of the bishop as the leader of the Roman Church; while the Valentinians promoted the direct, unmediated, dependence of their school on Christ, the Orthodox presented the bishop as the representative of the apostolic tradition par excellence<sup>54</sup>.

Was Hegesippus or not referring to the synodality of the early Church and the apostle-presbyters? To what extent did the developments of his time “alter” the picture of the Christian past? Considering the fact that the the *Diadochi* seems to have not survived and that the *Hypomnemata* survives only in fragmentary form, we cannot know with certainty what he did or did not write. However, it seems unlikely that Hegesippus was unaware of the *Acts*' testimony, according to which James was the first to co-rule the Church (Apostolic Council of 49 AD), along with the apostles

51. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, pp. 125-129.

52. *Acts* 11, 27-30; 15, 4-29; 21,18; *Gal.* 2, 9.

53. For the first Church government, see Vl. Pheidas, *Ἐκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία*, v. A', *ibid.*, pp. 37-38, 42-43, 49-51, 59-113; F. A. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops. The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church*, The Newman Press, New York 2001, pp. 206-217 (considering the primacy of Jacob in Jerusalem as an exceptional case compared to what was happening in the other Churches). According to Daniélou, *Ἡ θεολογία τοῦ Ἰουδαιοχριστιανισμοῦ*, *ibid.*, pp. 567-580 (espec. p. 578): “the situation of James and his successors [dynastic succession or caliphate] is presented as a special case and relates to Jerusalem and its character as Mother Church. A transformation of the institution of the apostles has evidently taken place. It seems that a higher local authority had been established, above many bishops or elders, each in charge of a group of the community”.

54. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, pp. 403-406.

and elders. It is possible that between 49 and 62 James's primacy was further strengthened because of the other apostles' missionaries and martyrdom<sup>55</sup>. In *FrH* 2 we read that: «διαδέχεται δὲ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν μετὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων ὁ ἀδελφὸς τοῦ κυρίου Ἰάκωβος», which Rufinus (ca.344-ca.411 AD) translates, probably remaining faithful to Hegesippus' intention, as follows: “*suscepit, inquit, ecclesiam cum apostolis frater domini Iacobus*”. Rufinus's translation indicates the Church's joint rule by James and the apostles<sup>56</sup>. Hegesippus also describes the election of Simeon of Clopas as an expression of synodality: «λόγος κατέχει τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῶν τοῦ κυρίου μαθητῶν τοὺς εἰς ἔτι τῷ βίῳ λειπομένους ἐπὶ ταύτῳ πανταχόθεν συνελθεῖν ἅμα τοῖς πρὸς γένους κατὰ σάρκα τοῦ κυρίου (πλείους γὰρ καὶ τούτων περιῆσαν εἰς ἔτι τότε τῷ βίῳ), βουλήν τε ὁμοῦ τοὺς πάντας περὶ τοῦ τίνα χρὴ τῆς Ἰακώβου διαδοχῆς ἐπικρίναι ἄξιον ποιήσασθαι, καὶ δὴ ἀπὸ μιᾶς γνώμης τοὺς πάντας Συμεῶνα τὸν τοῦ Κλωπᾶ [...] ἄξιον εἶναι δοκιμάσαι» (*FrH* 3). At this point, Eusebius seems to be transcribing Hegesippus's exact words, regarding the source the latter had used (λόγος κατέχει). What interests us here is that being a *desposynos* was not the absolute criterion for the succession of James the Adelphotheos. In the passage we can trace (a) the synod of the Lord's apostles, disciples, and relatives in the flesh; (b) the consultation process: («βουλήν τε ὁμοῦ τοὺς πάντας»), which was to result in a common consensus («δὴ ἀπὸ μιᾶς γνώμης»); and (c) and the candidate's personal value («διαδοχῆς ἐπικρίναι ἄξιον

55. Cf. M.J. D. Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon, *Ἡ ἐνότης τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἐν τῇ Θεῇ Λειτουργίᾳ καὶ τῷ Ἐπισκόπῳ κατὰ τοὺς τρεῖς πρώτους αἰῶνας*, Grigoris Publications, Athens <sup>2</sup>1990, pp. 54-55: “When the Twelve [Apostles] vanished from the scene of history in a very dark manner, we find the leadership of the church of Jerusalem in the hands of James along with the elders. These elders may have been in the Church of Jerusalem before James took over the leadership. In parallel, there appear the ‘deacons’, whose institution was not unconnected with the common diners, to which the Eucharist was then connected”.

56. Rufinus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 2.23.4 in: E. Schwartz (ed.), *Eusebius Werke: Kirchengeschichte*, vol. 2, J. C. Hinrich, Leipzig 1903, p. 167. For Rufinus as *Ecclesiastical History's* translator, who not only translates but also paraphrases, explains, and corrects Eusebius, see M. Humphries, “Rufinus' Eusebius: translation, continuation and edition in the Latin *Ecclesiastical History*”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16, 2 (2008), pp. 143-164.

ποιήσασθαι, ἄξιον εἶναι δοκιμάσαι»). Of course, for someone to be a δεσπόσυνος it was considered an additional qualification («ἀνεψιόν, ὥς γέ φασι, γεγονότα τοῦ σωτῆρος»). But Hegesippus implies that the basic criterion of acceptance was that of correct teaching («ἄρχεται δὲ ὁ Θεβουθις διὰ τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι αὐτὸν ἐπίσκοπον ὑποφθείρειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπὶ αἰρέσεων, ὧν καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν τῷ λαῷ»)⁵⁷.

The way in which Hegesippus understands the relationship between succession and correct teaching is therefore not simply institutional, nor is the dynastic dominance of the house of David in Jerusalem documented, even though the *desposynoi* were invested with special authority, with some of them being in the leadership of the local Church until at least the time of Trajan⁵⁸. The authority of the house of David was derived from Logos, i.e. the fulfillment of Davidic-Messianic expectations in the person of Jesus Christ. The thread of the right teaching, Hegesippus seems to tell us, ran in the cities of the empire through the episcopal succession, embodying the apostolic tradition, along the lines of the philosophical schools and perhaps the rabbinical teaching. To better understand Hegesippus's connection with the Christian past, we will focus on the transition from oral memory to written history, putting our author's context of origin under the microscope: the Church of Jerusalem.

57. As Brent has already observed, "Diogenes Laertius and the Apostolic Succession", pp. 383-384: "the Hegesippus fragments do not support this interpretation [χαλιφάτο] of the form of church government over which James presided. In *HE* iii.11, the strong notion of 'caliphate' as involving a blood relationship indispensable to holding office simply does not apply. Symeon is elected unanimously, yet it is mentioned only incidentally that he was the Lord's cousin since his father Clopas was Joseph's brother. In *HE* iv.22-4-5 Symeon must therefore have been chosen because he was the most suitable and not merely because of his blood line. Thebouthis began the line of heretics because he was not elected in succession to James. If the Jerusalem church had a succession-principle which required a blood-relationship with the Lord, then Thebouthis's candidature would have been ruled out from the start".

58. For succession's primary institutional role in Hegesippus, see Eshleman, *The social world of intellectuals*, pp. 224-225, 247.

## Memory and History

Eusebius writes (*FrH* 6): «Ὁ μὲν οὖν Ἡγήσιππος ἐν πέντε τοῖς ἐν ἡμᾶς ἐλθοῦσιν ὑπομνήμασιν τῆς ἰδίας γνώμης πληρεστάτην μνήμην καταλέλοιπεν». The Bishop of Caesarea perceives Hegesippus as the guardian of memory, as someone who preserves it and keeps it unchanged, passing it on to the future generations of Christians. Antonelli expresses a diametrically opposed view: «ces souvenirs, construits *ex novo* ou qui réinterprètent des faits dans une perspective spécifique doivent être capables d'appuyer et de légitimer le critère adopté par les Églises respectives»<sup>59</sup>. But to what extent does Hegesippus consider that he innovates by “constructing” the memory of the Christian past?

As we will try to show, Hegesippus does not construct the past *ex novo*, but interprets it selectively, following the established norms of his time. Bauckham's pioneering study regarding the autopsy of testimony in the gospels begins with the Papias of Hierapolis as an important source for the oral transmission and interpretation of Christian tradition, around the beginning of the 2nd century AD<sup>60</sup>.

From Pappias's passages (*FrP*) we learn that he was «ἀκουστὴς Ἰωάννου» (*FrP* 1.4); that «παρὰ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καλῶς ἔμαθον καὶ καλῶς ἐμνημόνευσα, συγκατατάξαι ταῖς ἐρμηνείαις», interested in «παρὰ ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενούσης» (*FrP* 3.3); that he continued a tradition going back to the apostles, since «Μάρκος μὲν ἐρμηνευτὴς Πέτρου γενόμενος, ὅσα ἐμνημόνευσεν, ἀκριβῶς ἔγραψεν καὶ Ματθαῖος μὲν οὖν Ἐβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ τὰ λόγια συνετάξατο, ἡρμήνευσεν δ' αὐτά, ὥς ἦν δυνατός ἕκαστος» (*FrP* 3.14-15)<sup>61</sup>. Bauckham believes, with some reservation, that the recording of the oral testimonies collected by Papias from the older generations was a kind of historical narrative. As for the ancient historians (e.g. Thucydides, Polybius, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Josephus), the aim of Papias –and, we should also add, of Hegesippus– was to prove the truth, a process in which first-hand

59. Antonelli, «La construction de la mémoire», p. 22.

60. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 12-38.

61. *Fragments of Papias and Quadratus* in: Ehrman (ed.), *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. II, pp. 94, 98, 102.

examination and collection of evidence from reliable witnesses were vital<sup>62</sup>. We have already mentioned that, in Hegessipus's case, these reliable witnesses were the bishops (*FrH* 6) and the Church of Jerusalem's local traditions (e.g., the ὡς γέ φασι in *FrH* 3 denotes general acceptance)<sup>63</sup>. F. H. Colson notes that Papias's special contribution to the transmission of oral traditions was that he co-interpreted his material (συγκατατάξαι ταῖς ἐρμηνείαις), following the rhetorical rules and norms<sup>64</sup>. A. Yadin-Israel identifies parallels between the method described by Papias and the early rabbinic literature after the destruction of the 70's. Terms such as ἀκουστής and ἐρμηνευτής relate to the listening, memorizing, and explaining of the oral tradition (παράδοσις) transmitted by the elders in a well-defined context<sup>65</sup>.

Scholars such as K. Bailey, Bauckham, and E. Eve help us to better understand the interpretation and transmission of the Christian past's memory. According to Bailey, such a process has been taking place within a community context; the "construction" of memory could not therefore be uncontrolled. Bauckham observes that the preservation and interpretation of memory was not limited to the neutral and objective recording of events, but to their signification, which was not done arbitrarily. According to Eve, memory was filtered through specific "schemata", "keying", and "script" to facilitate the process of oral transmission and to comprehensibly make sense of the past (e.g. Jesus Christ as the new David)<sup>66</sup>.

62. K. Bailey, "Informal Controlled Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels", *Themelios* 20, 2 (1995), pp. 4-11; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 252-263, 341-355 (espec. p. 351); E. Eve, "Memory, Orality and the Synoptic Problem", *Early Christianity* 6, 3 (2015), pp. 314-315.

63. Cf. what Herodotus (2.143) mentions about the genealogical data collected by Hekataeus of Miletus from the priests of Thebes in Egypt; I. S. Moyer, "Herodotus and an Egyptian mirage: the genealogies of the Theban priests", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 122 (2002), pp. 70-90.

64. F. H. Colson, "Τάξει in Papias (the Gospels and the rhetorical schools)", *The Journal of Theological Studies* 14, 53 (1912), pp. 62-69.

65. A. Yadin-Israel, "'For Mark was Peter's Tanna': Tradition and Transmission in Papias and the Early Rabbis", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 23, 3 (2015), pp. 337-362.

66. K. Bailey, "Informal Controlled Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels", *Themelios* 20, 2 (1995), pp. 4-11; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 252-263, 341-355 (espec. p.



Living one generation after Papias, Hegesippus must not have been unaware of the methods and techniques we have described. The pattern of episcopal succession would have been a convenient schema for his historical narrative, with codes and a common language that would have allowed him to interpret what he had heard and read, defending sound dogma. The biblical metaphors and images referring to James, considered by some scholars to be myths, are precisely these codes and a common language that would allow Hegesippus to communicate with his readers, to explain the “why” and the “how”, and ultimately to prove the truth of his faith. An objective, cool, and neutral historical narrative would have been unthinkable for Hegesippus. His subjectivity influenced his presentation of the events; still, it was not a matter of unbridled imagination but of a theological approach and interpretation of history. As it seems, Jerusalem, Hegesippus’s starting point, was both the setting of the narrative and the mnemonic reservoir where the materials of the first ecclesiastical history were kneaded. Based on written sources and archaeological data, B. Pixner and others have argued for the continuous presence (1st-4th centuries AD) –with some interruptions– of Christians in Jerusalem, having as the center of their activity the “apostolic synagogue” of Mount Zion, where the *ὕπερῶν* –the loft, garret– of the Last Supper and Pentecost was located<sup>67</sup>. More recent archaeological research questions the existence of finds that could date the Christian presence on Mount Zion to the period preceding the 4th century AD<sup>68</sup>. The sense of discontinuity is further reinforced by

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351); E. Eve, “Memory, Orality and the Synoptic Problem”, *Early Christianity* 6, 3 (2015), pp. 314-315.

67. See especially B. Pixner, *Paths of the Messiah and Sites of the Early Church from Galilee to Jerusalem. Jesus and Jewish Christianity in Light of Archaeological Discoveries*, Ignatius, San Francisco, CA 2010, pp. 250-252, 319-393, 398-414; Cf. R. Riesner, “Jesus, the primitive community, and the Essene quarter of Jerusalem”, in: J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Yale University Press, New Haven – London 1992, pp. 198-234. It is worth noting that “Mount Zion”, to which we are referring, is the South Western hill and not the biblical Zion, where the Temple was built. Possibly the name is connected with the local Judeo-Christian community and its Davidic-Messianic theology (Cf. Pixner, pp. 320-322).

68. Weksler-Bdolah, *Aelia Capitolina-Jerusalem*, pp. 32, 35, 136. The dating of the group of inscriptions from the “Judeo-Christian synagogue” (see Pixner, pp. 331-332), is

the testimony of Sulpicius Severus (ca. 363-ca. 425) that, after the Bar Kochba revolt (132-136) and Hadrian's decision to rebuild Jerusalem as a *colonia Romana*, the Jews were expelled from the city, forcing the Christians to elect as their bishop Marcus, *primum ex gentibus*<sup>69</sup>. If we accept Eusebius's reference to Hegesippus's Jewish origins as valid and assume that the latter had spent at least part of his life in Jerusalem, about which he writes in the *Hypomnemata*, then we realize that the historian was facing with new facts. The Christian sources for the revolt of 132 attribute the persecution of the Christians by the Jews to the formers' refusal to accept Bar Kochba's messianic claims<sup>70</sup>. Under this prism, Hegesippus's emphasis on Jesus Christ's Davidic descent and the leadership of the Church of Jerusalem seems to be linked to apologetic and anti-Jewish aims after the suppression of the revolt. The chasm between Christians and Jews had widened; thus, through the Christian succession narrative, Hegesippus sought to explain the fulfillment of the Church's messianic expectations, the new Israel, rather than the defeated first Israel by the Romans<sup>71</sup>.

The break with the past was neither radical nor definitive. In the fourth century, Epiphanius of Constantia, himself of Jewish origin, claimed that Hadrian had seen Mount Sion's "apostolic synagogue" in 130/131 (*Panarion*, 51, 27)<sup>72</sup>. Epiphanius's testimony may conceal some seeds of historical truth, suggesting an earlier tradition. In the mid-3rd century AD, the Judeo-Christians of Palestine interpreted Isaiah by

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considered late Roman, without specific identification: H. M. Cotton *et al.* (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, vol. 1, 2, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2012, pp. 111-112 (no. 804). For the absence of other Christian inscriptions preceding the 4th century, see Cotton *et al.* (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, vol. 1:1, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2010.

69. Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicorum quae vulgo inscribuntur Historia Sacra* in: *Patrologia Latina* 20, 2, 31A, p. 147. Pixner, *Paths of the Messiah*, p. 375, assumes that the Jerusalem Christians may have left the city after 132 and returned under Antoninus Pius (138-161). If this was indeed the case, then the transition from Judeo-Christian to *ex gentibus* leadership may have facilitated the return of Christians to Jerusalem.

70. M. Mor, *The Second Jewish Revolt. The Bar Kochba War, 132-136 CE*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2016, pp. 395-402.

71. Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie*, p. 96; Antonelli, «Hégésippe chez Eusèbe», p. 222.

72. Pixner, *Paths of the Messiah*, pp. 250-252.

methods reminiscent of the rabbinic tradition, while professing their belief in Christ the Messiah like Hegesippus and the Christians before Bar Kochba<sup>73</sup>. Although the archaeological evidence so far does not seem to prove it beyond doubt, the post-4th century Byzantine and Syriac ecclesiastical tradition identified Mount Zion, where the so-called “apostolic synagogue” was located, as the site of the Last Supper and Pentecost<sup>74</sup>. Of particular interest is O. Limor’s view, that the tradition of the existence of David’s tomb on Mount Zion, in the same place as the “apostolic synagogue”, goes back to the liturgical memory of James the Adelphotheos on Mount Zion during the early Byzantine period. At least from the 5th century AD, if not earlier, David and James Adelphotheos were commemorated in Jerusalem on the same day, 25 December. The tradition about David’s tomb on Mount Zion, as Limor argues, was gradually formed because of his association with Adelphotheus<sup>75</sup>. However, this continued the earliest traditions about *δεσποσύνους* and Davidic theology, which Hegesippus knew after 136.

We should therefore conclude that Hegesippus was part and parcel of a well-established oral tradition that allowed him to interpret and record his historical material. It is rather unlikely that he considered himself to be innovative or “constructing memory” in an arbitrary way. The meaning of his history was inextricably tied to the development and character of the Church of Jerusalem, especially to its Judeo-Christian character.

## Conclusion

To conclude, let us return to the three initial questions of this article: (a) Does Hegesippus write history? (b) What is the main argument of

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73. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 57-70.

74. Pixner, *Paths of the Messiah*, pp. 375-378; Cf. Weksler-Bdolah, *Aelia Capitolina-Jerusalem*, p. 35.

75. O. Limor, “The origins of a tradition: King David’s Tomb on Mount Zion”, *Traditio* 44 (1988), pp. 453-462.

his work? (c) What is the relationship of the narrative (historical or otherwise) to the memory of the Christian past?

Our conclusions can be summarized as follows:

(a) There is strong evidence that Hegesippus was the first writer who attempted to produce a historical narrative about the Church. Early church writers –Eusebius and Jerome–, consider him a historian. The literary genre of *Διαδοχή* goes back to the historiography of Greek philosophy during Roman times and seems to have been adopted, before or after Hegesippus, by rabbinic Judaism. Hegesippus is not writing in a historical vacuum; he is writing during or after Hadrian’s reign, when educated Christian apologists appeared as philosophers par excellence while promoting the Christian faith as philosophy par excellence. At the same time, Gnosticism’s threatening spread led the orthodox side to elevate the bishop to theological authority, i.e. to become apostolic tradition’s bearer and continuator. The above explains why Hegesippus chose to give his story this particular form.

(b) From the surviving fragments of the *Hypomnemata* we can discern two interconnected elements that permeate Hegesippus’s historical writing. The first is the *succession*: not merely institutional or administrative, but rather a succession of reception and delivery of the correct teaching (*ὁρθὸς λόγος*). Hegesippus seems to imply that at the core of orthodox teaching lies the belief that the Davidic-Messianic expectations are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Those who reject Christ as the eschatological king –Jewish, Christian, and Gentile– are outside the Church, the new Israel. The eschatological dimension of Christ’s royal genealogy can explain the emphasis Hegesippus places on the succession of *δεσποσύνων* in the leadership of the Jerusalem Church.

(c) It would be a mistake to evaluate Hegesippus’s historical project with the 19th-century criteria of historical “neutrality” and “objectivity”. This was not the intention of our historian. Nor would it be correct to claim that Hegesippus was arbitrarily guided by his piety or his unbridled imagination, “constructing memory”. Both positions ignore the processes of mnemonic transmission and control during the first Christian century –processes born in a context of orality, which became

flesh and blood as the written word. In the case of Hegesippus, what H. Arendt notes is true: “The one who tells what happens –λέγειν τὰ ἐόντα [Herodotus]– always tells a story, and in this story, the actual events lose their randomness and take on a humanly comprehensible meaning<sup>76</sup>. Hegesippus is not under any illusion that he accurately represents the past’s objective, but he interprets the past theologically, giving it meaning and life. *Hegesippus historiam subtextit*.

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76. H. Arendt, *Ἐλευθερία, Ἀλήθεια καὶ Πολιτική*, transl. G. N. Mertikas, Stasei Ekipontones Publications, Athens 2012, p. 112.