

I. THE TYPOLOGICAL¹ USE OF *DANIEL* “TALES”

¹ About the use of this term in this work see *supra*, introduction, pp. 21-23.

2. “TALES” OF DANIEL IN JUDEO-CHRISTIANITY.

FROM PASCHA EX PASSIONE TO MARTYRDOM

A peculiar and fruitful tradition in *Dn* “tales” paleochristian reception is represented by the inclusion of Daniel and his companions’ deeds in the reflection concerning the complex relationship between the persecution of community members and *Pascha*, and signally the interpretation of the martyr’s witness as a form of repetition of Jesus’ experience, which further leads to the idea of the incorporation of Christ *in* the same martyr’s body².

The elaboration of such theological contents passes through different hermeneutical stages, going from the generic identification of an association between martyrdom – alluded by *Dn* “tales” – and Christ’s passion, to a specific definition of the same nature of such link. These peculiar outcomes presuppose, at every level of their development, the adhesion to a particular conception of *Pascha*, primarily focused on the phase of *passio* and Christ’s death, rather than on the salvific dimension of resurrection, in a way that seems to send back to a “Quartodeciman” theological perspective³. The perception of a continuity between the death of the Messiah and the persecution

² For bibliographic references on such themes see *infra*, pp. 40-46. As B. DEHANDSCHUTTER, *Example and Discipleship. Some Comments on the Biblical Background of the Early Christian Theology of Martyrdom*, “Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae” 44 (1999), pp. 20-26, in part. p. 20, underlines, “the reflection on martyrdom occupied more than a marginal place in the intellectual life of the early church”.

³ The term “Quartodeciman” does not mean to allude here to a specific paleochristian community, but rather to a widespread theology that knows a paradigmatic expression in Asiatic context but circulated in every perimeter of early Christianities. A reconstruction of Quartodeciman conception, with particular attention to the link between passion and martyrdom theology, can be found in R. CACITTI 1994. See also G. VISONÀ, *Pasqua quartodecimana e cronologia evangelica della Passione*, “Ephemerides Liturgicae” 102 (1988), pp. 259-315. In this context it is enough to underline that the core of Quartodeciman specificity can be identified in the adhesion to *Jn* chronology of passion: if synoptics – from which Western Easter is derived – place last supper in conjunction with Jewish Ester (see *Mk* 14:12; *Mt* 26:17; *Lk* 22:15), dating Christ’s crucifixion on the next Sunday, in Gospel of John the death of Christ coincides with the day in which Hebrews immolated lambs (*Jn* 19:31). According to the scholars, such chronological discrepancy may be explained either hypothesizing different theological intentions in Gospels’ authors or in the light of the liturgical practices of origins: as R. CANTALAMESSA, *La Pasqua della nostra salvezza: le tradizioni pasquali della Bibbia e della primitiva chiesa*, Torino 1971 (Teologia biblica), p. 81, underlines: “per Giovanni Gesù sostituisce l’agnello immolato nel tempio con la sua morte in croce, mentre per i sinottici Gesù sostituisce l’agnello della cena pasquale offrendo se stesso, eucaristicamente, come cibo sacrificale”. The outcomes of such chronological and theological variations merge into the different celebrations of *Pascha* in Quartodeciman and Western traditions, as described by Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. G. BARDY, SC 41, p. 66; V 23:1. If Quartodeciman celebration puts the accent on the dimensions of Christ’s *passio* and *Parousia* during the 14th day, Western Easter is anchored to the idea of dominical resurrection (that is why the diffusion of the latter induced “lo spostamento del baricentro della Pasqua sulla risurrezione piuttosto che sulla Passione”, as G. VISONÀ 1988, p. 273, puts in evidence). The expression “dort Passa hier Ostern” coined by C. SCHMIDT, *Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferstehung*, Leipzig 1919 (Texte und Untersuchungen 43), p. 579, with reference to the distinction between a *Pascha* commemorating the passion and another one commemorating the resurrection, remains enlightening and efficacious. Concerning the remote reasons of such chronological discrepancy see R. CANTALAMESSA, *La Pasqua nella chiesa antica*, Torino 1978 (Traditio

of his followers can be considered as the most ancient core of Christian theology⁴, inclined to conceive Jesus' cross as the principal core and heart of Easter as G. CANTALAMESSA underlines: "la più antica catechesi pasquale della Chiesa (...) concepì essenzialmente (...) la Pasqua di Cristo come la sua passione e la festa di Pasqua della chiesa come commemorazione di quella stessa passione"⁵ and, again: "all'inizio, fino al III secolo, dal punto di vista dei contenuti teologici, esiste una tradizione pasquale fondamentalmente unitaria: è la tradizione che dal luogo di origine e di maggior fioritura è chiamata asiatica (...) essa commemora tutto il mistero «antico e nuovo» culminante nell'evento salvifico della croce"⁶.

Considering both that the focal point of *Dn* "tales" reception should be principally researched in their martyrial value, and that martyrdom corresponds to *Pascha*⁷ in a Quartodeciman perspective, it becomes easy to understand why, in specific Christian districts, these narrations assumed a privileged role in the hermeneutic circle which connects the biblical characters to a peculiar interpretation of Christ's passion, in a way that simultaneously leads to a deeper reflection on both martyrdom and Jesus death.

Two categories of documents mainly show and reveal such interpretative tendency: on one side, iconography expresses in this field one of its principal vocations and one of its most fruitful hermeneutic reflections; on the other, *Acta* and *Passiones* of preconstantinian African martyrs offer a literary example of this exegetical outcome.

Concerning the figurative development of the theme, two points require to be immediately outlined: 1) the first remarkable *datum* is represented by the capillary diffusion of this peculiar use of *Dn* narrations⁸; 2) secondly, in most cases iconography chooses to recall the connection between passion and martyrdom as a generic statement and as a macroscopic evidence, while only a few

Christiana SEI 3). About traces of Quartodeciman theology in ancient authors see ID., *I più antichi testi pasquali della Chiesa: le omelie di Melitone di Sardi e dell'Anonimo Quartodecimano e altri testi del II secolo*, Roma 1972 (Bibliotheca "Ephemerides Liturgicae"; Sectio historica 33); A. STEWART-SYKES, *The Lamb's High Feast: Melito, Peri Pascha and the Quartodeciman Paschal Liturgy at Sardis*, Leiden 1998 (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 42).

⁴ This conception of *Pascha* emerges also from one of the earliest etymological interpretations of the term indicating Christ's death and resurrection: in specific contexts, as N. FÜGLISTER, *Die Heilsbedeutung des Pascha*, München 1963 (Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 8), pp. 165-166, notices, paleochristian literature explains the word *Pascha* as a derivative of the verb *πάσχειν*, rather than as a reference to the idea of the "passage" or the "presence" of God. This philological explanation, exclusively based on the consonance with the Greek expression, is untenable, but it reveals and presupposes the strong connection established between Jesus' experience and the concept of sufferance and sacrifice. About different etymologies of the term *Pascha* see in part. C. MOHRMANN, *Pascha, Passio, Transitus*, "Ephemerides Liturgicae" 66 (1952), pp. 37-52; R. CANTALAMESSA 1978, pp. xviii-xix; xxvi-xxvii.

⁵ R. CANTALAMESSA 1971, p. 158.

⁶ R. CANTALAMESSA 1978, p. xviii.

⁷ R. CACITTI 1994, p. 103.

⁸ See in part. *infra*, p. 33.

documents reveal traces of a more punctual reflection about specific acceptations and consequences of this link.

On the contrary, literature does not give frequent signs of this interpretation of the “tales”, completely devolving upon “martyrial literature” such elaboration. As it will be illustrated, iconography and literature run parallel as far as the theological contents of this tradition are concerned. In order to delineate a clear panorama of their specific developments, it appears appropriate to start from the analysis of figurative evidences, at least due to their quantitative predominance; the study of “tales” reception in *Acta* and *Passiones* will be the topic of a final section. As regards the iconographic section, the reconstruction will try to proceed from documents that mention the *theologumenon* in a “generic” perspective, to those attesting peculiar and original solutions.

2.1. THE CONTINUITY BETWEEN MARTYRDOM AND PASSION: DANIEL “TALES” AND JONAH IN PALEOCHRISTIAN ICONOGRAPHY

As has been outlined, iconography is the context in which *Dn* “tales” are involved in a speculation concerning Quartodeciman Easter in the most consistent way. The technique adopted by figurative source in order to express such content is principally represented by the creation of an “iconographic couple” that knew a widespread diffusion since the beginning of documentation, namely the association between the types derived from *Dn* and the principal symbol of Christ’s passion, that is the scene of Jonah thrown from the ship in the sea monster’s jaws⁹.

2.1.1. The programmatic function of Jonah cycle

Before analysing the characteristics of this “couple” and its theological relevance, it becomes necessary to shortly introduce the scene involved, together with those extracted from *Dn*, in this elaboration, in order to proceed *from* the “internal” meaning of single subjects *to* the interpretation of their relationship. The type of the prophet thrown in the sea by sailors is one of the themes

⁹ Describing the scene of Jonah, P. PRIGENT 1995, p. 178, notices its frequent association with Noah (16 times) and with the types extracted from *Dn*: the scholar enumerates 14 associations with Daniel in lions’ den and 13 with the scene of the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace.

included in the so-called “Jonah cycle”¹⁰, a sequence of figures alluding to the scriptural story, whose most attested moments are¹¹: 1) the already cited ejection of Jonah from the ship¹²; 2) the prophet spitted out from the *ketos* jaws; 3) his rest under the pergola¹³. Together with the same types derived from *Dn* and the representation of Noah in the ark, the cycle is undoubtedly among the earliest¹⁴ and most diffused¹⁵ subjects of paleochristian iconography. The reasons that may have

¹⁰ Here follows a short and selected bibliography about the type in chronological order: H. LECLERCQ, s.v. “Jonas”, in DACL 7, coll. 2572-263; F.V.M. CUMONT, *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des romains*, Paris 1966 (Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 35), pp. 166-170; A. FERRUA, *Paralipomeni di Giona*, “Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana” 38 (1962), pp. 7-62; A.J. ALLENBACH, *La figure de Jonas dans les textes préconstantiniens ou l'histoire de l'exégèse au secours de l'iconographie*, in A.A. V.V. *La Bible et les pères: Colloque de Strasbourg (1^{er}-3 Octobre 1969)*, Paris 1971 (Travaux du Centre d'Études Supérieure Spécialisé d'Histoire de Religion de Strasbourg), pp. 97-112; E. DASSMANN 1973, pp. 385-397; S. CHOW, *The Sign of Jonah Reconsidered: a Study of its Meaning in the Gospel Tradition*, Stockholm 1995 (Coniectanea Biblica; New Testament 27), pp. 194-213; M. PERRYMOND, *Ninive la città del profeta Giona: iconografia, simbolismo, narrazione*, in E. CAVALCANTI, *Il De Civitate Dei. L'opera, le interpretazioni, l'influsso*, Roma 1996, pp. 627-640; F. TRISTAN 1996, pp. 183; P. PRIGENT 1995, p. 159-178; E. FERGUSON, s.v. *Jonah*, in “Encyclopedia of Early Christianity” (1997), pp. 628 and ID. *Jonah in Early Christian Art: Death, Resurrection and Immortality*, in A.C. NIANG-C. OSIEK (edd.), *Text, Image and Christians in the Greco-Roman World. A Festschrift in Honor of David Lee Balch*, (Princeton Theological Monograph Series 176), Eugene 2012, pp. 342-351; J. ENGEMANN, *Jonas V. Kunst*, “Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana” 18 (1998), pp. 689-699; D. MAZZOLENI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 191-193; M. DULAEY 2004, pp. 71-91; S.J. DAVIS, *Jonah in Early Christian Art: Allegorical Exegesis and the Roman Funerary Context*, “Australian Religious Studies Review” 13/1 (2000), pp. 72-83. About a specific and unusual use of the theme see N. BONANSEA, *La variante di Giona vestito nell'iconografia paleocristiana tra III e VI secolo*, “Vetera Christianorum” 46 (2009), pp. 199-202. Concerning the Roman origin of the Christian iconography of Jonah see in part. D. BALCH, *From Endymion in Roman domus to Jonah in Christian Catacombs: From Houses of the Living to Houses for the Death. Iconography and Religion in Transition*, in L. BRINK-D. GREEK (edd.), *Commemorating the Dead. Texts and Artifacts in Context: Studies on Roman, Jewish and Christian Burials*, Berlin 2008, pp. 273-301.

¹¹ The exhaustive and valid classification of different representations of the cycle provided by J. WILPERT 1932, pp. 204-220, is efficaciously reprised by D. MAZZOLENI in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 191-192: “Fin dai primi decenni del III secolo la storia di Giona si presenta nella pittura delle catacombe in composizioni cicliche, costituite nella maggioranza dei casi da tre scene: il profeta buttato in mare dai marinai e inghiottito dal mostro marino; rigettato sulla spiaggia e in riposo sotto un pergolato di zucche”. If these are certainly the most diffused scenes, it must be noticed that “in alcuni affreschi si aggiunge – o si sostituisce – alle tre consuete qualche altra raffigurazione: Giona che sta faticosamente arrampicandosi sugli scogli, mentre il *ketos* sta immergendosi nei flutti marini (...); Giona mesto e corrucciato, con la mano sotto al mento per il disseccamento della pianta ad opera del verme, inviato da Dio (...); Giona disturbato dal sole (...); Giona in cammino verso Ninive” (*IBID.*, p. 192). A complete description of the meanings of Jonah cycle, in dialogue with ancient theology and literature, can be found in G. PELIZZARI 2010, pp. 104-126.

¹² A specific description of the theme and a study concerning the single elements composing the scene can be found in N. CAMBI, *Il motivo di Giona gettato nel mare*, in A.A. V.V., *Historiam Pictura refert. Miscellanea in onore di Padre Alejandro Recio Veganzones O.F.M.*, Città del Vaticano 1994 (Studi di antichità Cristiana pubblicati a cura del Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana 51).

¹³ The scene of the rest “jouit d'un statut privilégié parmi toutes les représentations de Jonas: elle apparaît souvent seule, ce qui est rare pour les autres scènes, et, dans les combinaisons offertes par les cycles, c'est elle qui revient le plus souvent” as P. PRIGENT 1995, p. 172, notices. For a systematic inspection on the theme see R. FERRARIO, *Il riposo di Giona. Analisi di un motivo iconografico nel cristianesimo delle origini*, Tesi di Laurea, Università degli Studi, Milano a. a. 2003 – 2004 (rel. R. CACITTI).

¹⁴ If M. DULAEY 2004, p. 71, remembers that Celsus already knew the representation of Jonah cycle, P. PRIGENT 1995, p. 159, underlines the early and quick diffusion of the theme among the first manifestations of paleochristian art.

¹⁵ A.J. ALLENBACH 1971, p. 97, notices: “Le personnage de Jonas est incontestablement le modèle iconographique le plus répandu de l'art chrétien à l'époque préconstantinienne”. A survey about the

determined its fortune can be probably connected with both its own meaning, that touches the deepest heart of the *kerygma*, and the peculiarity of its neotestamentary exegesis: the link between Jonah and Jesus is actually sanctioned in early Christian literature¹⁶ starting from the words of *Mt* 12:38-42¹⁷, where the same Christ explicitly interprets the story of the prophet as a “sign” of his own passion and resurrection¹⁸. The direct association between the protagonist of First Testament and Christ seems to be assumed and accepted also in iconography, which anyway develops it in a sensibly different key: the typological focus of the link appears to be transferred, so to speak, *from* “characters” *to* “events”, so that the single moments of Jonah’s experience are interpreted as an “anticipation” and a “prefiguration” of the different phases of Christ’s *Pascha*.

In this univocal and specific system, 1) the scene of the prophet thrown overboard refers to *passio Christi* and death, precisely symbolized by the “staurological” representation of the ship¹⁹; 2) the ejection from the *ketos* jaws alludes to resurrection; 3) the rest under the pergola evokes, in generic perspective and signally in the most ancient theologies, the theme of Christ glorification and, more punctually, the eschatological rest disclosed by Jesus and predisposed for the saved ones.

This iconographic use of Jonah cycle represents an unique occasion to identify and decipher the prevailing conception of *Pascha* diffused in the *Sitz im Leben* of each document: either stressing or omitting different moments of the biblical story, communities implicitly highlighted or lessened specific phases of Christ’s experience, expressing the assumption of a peculiar theological perspective and revealing the consequent adhesion to a tradition among the others²⁰.

diffusion of the type in early Christian paintings, mosaics and sarcophagi is developed by. D. MAZZOLENI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 192-193.

¹⁶ Concerning the Christian literary reception of *Jo* see E. DASSMANN 1973, pp. 222-232; Y. DUVAL, *Le livre de Jonas dans la littérature chrétienne grecque et latine: sources et influences du Commentaire sur Jonas de Saint Jérôme*, Paris 1973 (Etudes Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité. 53-54). See also G. PANI, s.v. “Giona I: Nei Padri”, in DPAC II (1984), coll. 1518-1521.

¹⁷ *Mt* 12:38-42 (cf. *Mk* 8:11-12; *Lk* 11:29-32); 38. “Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, «Teacher, we want to see a sign from you». 39. He answered, «A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here. 42. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here»”.

¹⁸ See D. MAZZOLENI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 191: “Giona era prefigurazione del Cristo, per essere rimasto per tre giorni nel ventre del pistrice come Gesù nel sepolcro prima di risorgere”. About the meaning of the “sign of Jonah” from its origin in Jewish tradition to early Christianities see S. CHOW 1995, in part. pp. 176-193.

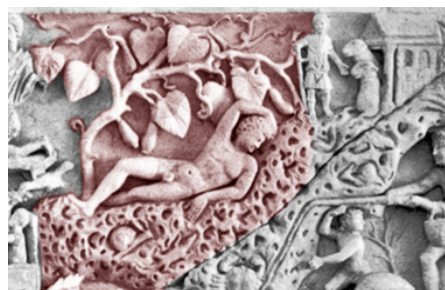
¹⁹ See *infra*, pp. 47-58.

²⁰ A concrete example of the use of Jonah cycle in early Christianities is offered by the so-called “Jonah sarcophagus”, one of the earliest figurative evidences (REP 1:35; *fig.* 1). A wide section of the document is occupied by a monumental representation of the three most attested moments of the cycle (Jonah thrown overboard [1], spitted out from the monster [2] and resting under the pergola [3]), assumed with the specific function to articulate a theological manifest in which different phases of the Christian experience could be

obtains a clearer and deeper explanation in the light of the perspective about Easter assumed in that specific iconographic context²¹.

This particular vocation of the cycle is also revealed by its most usual placement in sarcophagi production: prevalently put on antefixes²², it seems to be treated as a sort of “frame” that “scans”, “ordinates” and “contextualizes” the figurative sequences developed on the front side of documents, associating each portion of them with a particular moment of *Pascha*²³.

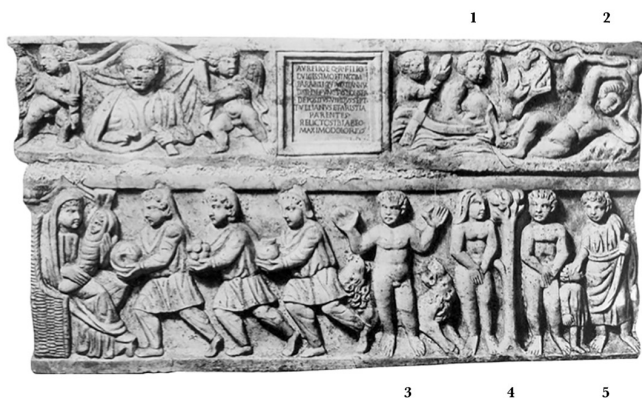
²¹ Coming back again to the example of “Jonah sarcophagus” (vd. *supra*, n. 20), it is possible to remark, for instance, how the association between the shepherd with a “big” sheep and the scene of the rest of the prophet suggest, on one side, the interpretation of the eschatological salvation as a “reward” available for community members; on the other side, the same assumption in *Christi grex* reveals to be conceived as the final outcome of *Pascha*, strongly connected with the image of the rest. (*Fig. 2*).



(*Fig. 2*)

²² Considering documents with scenes derived from “tales”, the evidence appears clearly confirmed, see *infra*, *tab. 1*. It should be noticed that also in “Jonah sarcophagus” – that represents a clamorous exception to the such rule – the cycle, extending in the whole inferior area of the document, substantially maintains the same function of “frame” of other scenes.

²³ A typical case of such use of the cycle can be found on San Lorenzo sarcophagus (REP 1:662; *fig 3*):



(*Fig 3*)

In this case it is sufficient to focus on the right portion of the document to notice how the scenes of Jonah represented in the antefix (1, 2) can be interpreted as a “frame” that allows to establish an association between the Easter phases alluded by them and the images placed in the central part of the sarcophagus: Daniel in lions’ den (3) corresponds to the type of Jonah thrown from the ship (1), so that a symbol of martyrdom is associated with the moment of Jesus’ death; the image of the protoparents (4), alluding to the condition of men in First Testament economy, is placed in a space “between death and rest” (see D. CALCAGNINI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 96-101); the scene of the eschatological rest (2) is finally linked with the representation of the healing of the blind man (5), a reference to the salvation made accessible for those who believe in Christ as the only Messiah (about this theme see C. RANUCCI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 200).

Coming back to the specific subject of this exposition, that is the “figurative couple” composed of the prophet thrown from the ship – a symbol of Christ’s death – and martyrial themes extracted from “tales”, two material *data* deserve to be cited: 1) first of all, this association is among the most ancient and widespread in the whole documentary panorama²⁴; 2) secondly, it finds the fullest and most significant expression in sarcophagi production²⁵, mainly in documents coming from Roman and Italic context²⁶.

Considering preconstantinian Christian documents, it is possible to enumerate:

- 10 associations between *Dn* types and Jonah swallowed by the *ketos*²⁷;
- 3 associations between *Dn* types and Jonah resting under the pergola²⁸;
- no associations between *Dn* types and Jonah spewed out by the sea monster²⁹.

The following table specifies which *Dn* types are preferably associated with Jonah thrown from the ship, which figurative technique is applied to link the subjects one another, and which is the place assumed by the iconographic couple on documents.

Here follows a possible interpretation of the section: martyrdom, an emanation and a prosecution of *Pascha passio*, propels the passage of community members from a condition of sin toward a condition of faith and salvation, namely the access, through the sacrifice, to the eschatological rest and to God’s kingdom (the identification of this “vertical” link between the images historiated on the cover and the figures placed in the front does not exclude – but, on the contrary, integrates – the “specular” connection that can be identified between the representations on the antefixes).

²⁴ Though critics do not seem to have directly studied the association between the single scenes of Jonah and the other representations, generically referring to the whole cycle instead, E. FERGUSON in A.C. NIANG-C. OSIEK 2012, p. 349, notices: “Jonah in catacomb art and sarcophagi is often in the company of other biblical scenes. Most frequent are Noah in the ark, Daniel in the lions’ den, three young men in the furnace, Susanna, Moses striking the rock, Abraham sacrificing Isaac, and from the New Testament the raising of Lazarus”.

²⁵ Though such combining is attested in catacomb paintings, the types of *Dn*, and mainly that one of the prophet in the den, are here preferably linked with images alluding to resurrection and salvation, as it will be underlined *infra*, chapter 4.

²⁶ See *infra*, tab. 1.

²⁷ See *infra*, tab. 1.

²⁸ REP 1:750; 1:925; 2:91.

²⁹ If the identification of an “iconographic association” between two or more scenes principally depends upon the analysis of the applied figurative techniques in the elaboration of documents, this operation unavoidably contemplates a margin of subjectivity. Both for this reason and because of the difficulty to anchor documents to a punctual chronology, it is recommendable and cautious to consider these *data* as merely indicative.

Name of document	Type associated with Jonah thrown overboard	Technique of the association	Place of the figurative couple
REP 1:894 Fragment from Camposanto Teutonico	<u>The three Hebrews in the fiery furnace</u>	contiguity	<u>Cover</u>
REP 1:797 Fragments from Museo Nazionale Romano and “Berlin Museum”	The three Hebrews refuse to adore the statue of Nabuchadnezzar	<u>specularity</u>	<u>Cover</u>
REP 1:662 Sarcophagus from San Lorenzo cemetery	Daniel in lions’ den	superimposition	<u>Cover</u> /front
REP 1:441 Fragment from San Callisto cemetery	<u>The three Hebrews in the fiery furnace</u>	<u>superimposition</u>	<u>Cover</u>
REP 1:130 Antefixes from Museo Lateranense nr. 99	<u>The three Hebrews in the fiery furnace</u>	<u>specularity</u>	<u>Cover</u>
REP 1:664 Sarcophagus from anonym cemetery near San Lorenzo	<u>The three Hebrews in the fiery furnace</u>	<u>specularity</u>	<u>Cover</u>
REP 2:6 Neaples stone	Daniel in lions’ den	superimposition	front
REP 2:242 Velletri stone	Daniel in lions’ den	superimposition	front
REP 2:213 Oxford fragment	<u>The three Hebrews in the fiery furnace</u>	contiguity	<u>cover</u>
REP 2:181 Sarcophagus from Genova	Daniel in lions’ den	<u>specularity</u>	<u>cover</u>

(Tab. 1)

As the scheme reveals, the most attested option is characterized as follows:

- Jonah thrown from the ship is associated with the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace;
- the figurative expedient adopted to link the scenes is “specula”;
- the couple is placed on sarcophagi covers³⁰.

³⁰ The evidence confirms what has been previously said about the most diffused collocation of Jonah scenes on sarcophagi; see *supra*, p. 31.

The second association recurring on documents involves the theme of Daniel in lions' den, which is connected with Jonah's ejection from the ship through the technique of the "superimposition".

Considering the specificities of the use of the prophetic cycle, the fact that iconography clearly favours the combination between types derived from "tales" and the moment alluding to the death of Christ undoubtedly represents a theological element of remarkable significance, capable of revealing the specific value attributed to events happened to Daniel and his companions: the biblical stories are interpreted and read in the light of the *kerygma*, and signally in the light of *passio*. If the selected moment of *Pascha* as "frame" for *Dn* narrations coincides with the death of Jesus, the conceptual grounding of such link should be probably researched in that "martyrial tension" which represents the "common denominator" between the type of the Hebrews in the fiery furnace and that one of the prophet in *lacus leonis*³¹; at the same time, the association allows to accede to a more precise definition of the matrixes of such "martyrial tension".

³¹ The martyrial feature of the figurative types extracted from *Dn* has not been sufficiently highlighted by scientific production (see *supra*, introduction, pp. 13-14). As partially outlined, the underestimation of such semantic coordinate may depend on two principal causes: 1) the application of an interpretative method that focuses on types as "single entities" and neglects their reciprocal connection in iconographic programs caused the diffusion of "vague interpretations", that assume the whole panorama of figurative themes as salvation paradigms (see *supra*, introduction, p. 13, and *infra*, chapter 4, pp. 155-157); 2) critics unanimously interpret the concept of "martyrial representation" in strict connection with the diffusion of historical martyrs' portraits, or with realistic illustrations of historical persecutions. The possible existence of scenes alluding to "martyrdom as *theologumenon*" and as abstract coordinate of paleochristian reflection has not for this reason been actually taken into account, as it emerges from both generic studies on iconographic types, and works specifically dedicated to "martyrial representations" (see, as paradigmatic case, the rich study of A. GRABAR, *Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, I: *Architecture*; II: *Iconographie*; III: *Album*, Paris 1943-1946, where the privileged object of the inspection is represented by "martyr portraits"). Such perspective brought to a substantial underestimation of the "martyrial core" of some iconographic types, as it happens in the case of the figures derived from *Dn* "tales" or with the representation of Peter's arrest. The attribution of a martyrial meaning to *Dn* scenes cannot be assumed as a passive presuppose, but it will rather have to be progressively confirmed and defined through the study of those figures' assumption. Notwithstanding this, it is already possible to preliminary point out and fix some elements which apparently support this interpretative hypothesis: 1) the "martyrial connotation" assumed by those themes in some literary contexts, among which it is possible to cite *Acta* and *Passiones* of martyrs (see *infra*, pp. 59-90). The evidence is also observed by M. MINASI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 162 and B. MAZZEI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 177, though without a specific reference to martyrial literature; see also W.H.C. FREND, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: a Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus*, Oxford 1956, p. 65, who affirms: "Without Maccabees and without Daniel a Christian theology of martyrdom would scarcely have been thinkable"); 2) the iconographic selection, among different phases of the biblical narration, of moments that strongly remind of the modalities of Christian persecutions (*expositio ad bestias*, fire, refusal to worship the emperor; the argument will be further investigated, *infra*, chapter 6). In his study concerning the elaboration of martyrdom theology, TH. BAUMEISTER, *Die Anfänge der Theologie des Martyrium*, Münster 1980 (Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 45), pp. 13-23, cites the contribution of *Dn*, focusing in particular on "visions" section and omitting an in-depth analysis of the figures of the prophet in the lions' den and the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace.

a) *Lateran antefixes (REP 1:130)*

The widespread “couple”³² formed by Jonah and the three young men exposed to the flames seems to conceive and present the connection between *Pascha* and martyrdom as a generic statement and as a sort of “title” for the iconographic programs developed on documents. The fact that such figures are mainly placed on sarcophagi covers remarks and expresses the substantial intention to announce the continuity between *passio Christi* and martyrdom as the essential presuppose, fundament and “frame” of Christian experience.

The antefixes of Lateran Museum (REP 1:130; *fig. 4*)³³, dated at the first third of 4th century, show the typical development of this figurative option³⁴: the scenes are actually placed on the cover of the document and the figurative expedient that conveys their reciprocal relation is represented by the “specular” collocation. The sections of the document divided by the *tabula inscripta*³⁵ (3) perform both an internal coherence, and an external mutual dialogue. In the left antefix, the furnace (2) is combined with the portrait of the dead (1). The fact that the image of the sarcophagus owner, included in the theological manifest, turns to the three young Hebrews as to look at them supports the already cited hypothesis that the scene extracted from *Dn* maintains a privileged connection with communities and alludes to Christian persecutions³⁶.



(*Fig. 4*)

The “exegetical key” which discloses the meaning of such link should not be mainly researched in the possibility that the dead “historically” died from flames exposition as a martyr; what really matters in this context is rather the “theological value” attributed to his death, which would derive a particular dignity and a deeper sense from the connection with a biblical symbol of martyrdom.

³² See *supra*, pp. 27-34.

³³ Some bibliographical references: O. MARUCCHI, *I musei e le gallerie pontificie nell'anno 1924-1925*, II: *Relazione*, “Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia” 3 (1924-1925), p. 468, nr. 3, *fig. 4*; J. WILPERT 1932, pp. 214, 260; F. GERKE, *Die christlichen Sarkophage der vorkonstantinischen Zeit*, Berlin 1940 (Studien zu spätantike und byzantinische Kunstgeschichte 1), pp. 182; 368 VII B I 15; 373 X 9; G. BOVINI, *Musei Capitolini. I monumenti cristiani (Cataloghi dei Musei Comunali di Roma II)*, Roma 1952, pp. 183-4, *fig. 186*; 310, nr. 109; REP 1, p. 88.

³⁴ See *supra*, *tab. 1*.

³⁵ Here follows the inscription: *Plotius Ter/tius et Faustina, com/servi dei fece/run<i> sibi in pace.*

³⁶ See *supra*, n. 31.

The first, principal acceptance of such “deeper sense” has to be researched in the intrinsic power of the typological exegesis: the scriptural experience of Daniel’s companions results in the present experience of Christians, providing the theological elements to interpret and understand it; the second acceptance – on which it will be necessary to come back later - consists in the logical consequence of this typological connection: if the experience of the dead is associated with that one of the martyrs, then the former should implicitly benefit of the same destiny predisposed for the latter.

On the right antefix, only two scenes of Jonah cycle are developed: the swallowing of the prophet by the *ketos* (4) and the rest under the pergola (5) are seamlessly connected without the mediation of the type of Jonah rejected by the monster. The symbol of Christ’s death directly evolves in the representation of the eschatological rest, with no punctual allusion to the resurrection, which may have been at most assumed as an implicit element. Also admitting such unexpressed reference, it remains true that the author of the document clearly grants a special relevance to sacrifice and salvation, probably conceiving them as strictly united.

Coming to the “second interpretative level” of the cover, that is the “external dialogue” between the antefixes, it must be noticed that the scenes divided by the *tabula* may be reciprocally connected through the expedient of the “specularity”. The portrait of the sarcophagus owner (1) and the figure of Jonah under the pergola occupy the same place in the opposite sections (4): such combining can be interpreted as a possible reference to the access of the dead, significantly represented with the attribute of the *parapetasma*³⁷, to the eschatological dimension symbolized by the resting prophet. The same specular relation links the central figures of the sarcophagus, so that the three Hebrews in the furnace (2) are associated with Jonah thrown overboard (4): as already explained³⁸, the couple alludes to the connection between martyrdom and *passio Christi*.

The complete reading of the whole figurative program of Lateran cover puts in evidence the development of a concise but dense “theological manifest”:

- the dead – and indirectly the entire community recalled by him – is firstly characterised as a martyr, being typologically associated with Daniel’s companions in the flames. Such connection, evidenced by the same attitude of the man, who looks at the Hebrews placed next to him, activates a reinterpretation and an attribution of sense and value to

³⁷ About the interpretation of this detail see D. MAZZOLENI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 243: “Sembra che il *parapetasma* si debba interpretare come uno sfondo convenzionale per trasporre i personaggi raffigurati dinanzi ad esso da un ambiente reale ad uno simbolico, un’allusione generica al mondo ultraterreno, forse in relazione con i velari adoperati nei riti funebri”.

³⁸ See *supra*, pp. 30-34.

his historical experience, now understood in the light of the event narrated in First Testament.

- Such event, *umbra* and “anticipation” of Christian martyrdom, is in turn explained: the death of Jesus, alluded by “Jonah’s ship”, represents its fundament and its paradigm, so that the historical phenomenon of persecution becomes a “repetition” and an “emanation” of the prototypic sacrifice of the Messiah.
- Both facts that the believer’s death obtains a “martyrial connotation” and that martyrdom is conceived as a prosecution of *passio* imply the final access of the victims to God’s reign and to the eschatological rest, symbolized by Jonah under the pergola and disclosed by Christ in the same moment of his crucifixion (as has been noticed, resurrection is not represented)³⁹.

³⁹ The described scheme returns with slight differences on most covers developing the association between Jonah and the three Hebrews: REP 1:797 (here the association is not with the scene of the furnace, but with that one of the refusal to adore the statue of Nabuchadnezzar); 1:441; 1:664. Document REP 2:181 presents the same structure, but the type of the furnace is substituted with Daniel in lions’ den (in this case, the representation of the rest is combined with the image of Jonah spewed by the monster in a sort of *crisis* that presupposes an explicit mention of resurrection). The meaning of the sequence seems to remain substantially unaltered, and in this case it is possible to affirm that the images of Daniel and three Hebrews are treated as comparable allusions to “Quartodeciman martyrdom”.

2.1.3. *Excursus: the adoption of the three Hebrews' type from Jewish Easter to Quartodeciman theology*

Analysing the process that leads to the attribution of an “Easter meaning” to the type of the furnace, it becomes necessary to consider the “Paschal value” already attached to the story in Jewish tradition. As N. FÜGLISTER noticed, after the Egyptian Easter, a series of actions chronologically placed in conjunction with that experience came in succession; among them it is possible to enumerate both the episode of Daniel escaped from the lions’ den and that one of his companions saved from the flames⁴⁰. According to the scholar, the chronological coincidence between Jewish Easter and other events is exploited as expedient to convey the idea of the “passage” from a situation of oppression and death toward a condition of freedom and life. The same interpretative technique seems to have been in some measure inherited by Christians, and especially by “martyrial literature”, where the continuity between *passio Christi* and the death of the martyrs is often conveyed by the definition of a “coincidenza calendariale”⁴¹. In the case of iconography, it is possible to say that the original “Paschal meaning” of the figure of the Hebrews assumes a Christian value through the association with the symbol of Jesus sacrifice⁴².

Such generic “transfer” of the “Paschal event” on a “Christian-Easter scenario” propels a further exegetical outcome: the young men, who refused to adore the statue of Nabuchadnezzar and accepted to sustain the consequent suffering, become a “type”, an “anticipation”, an “*umbra*” of community members who opposed to the emperor’s devotion and faced martyrdom. In other words, in a peculiar Christian tradition this remote “Paschal story” is involved in a specific reflection that focuses on the identity between Christ’s sacrifice and martyrdom experience; this outcome can be considered as an expression of the synoptic motif of *sequela Christi*⁴³ characterizing the earliest

⁴⁰ N. FÜGLISTER 1963, p. 218.

⁴¹ See R. CACITTI 1994, in part. p. 91-92; 103. See also N. FÜGLISTER 1963, p. 218.

⁴² A further element underling the typological connection may be represented by the idea of Christ’s assumption of the prophets’ destiny, as TH. BAUMEISTER, *Genese und Entfaltung der alkirchlichen Theologie des Martyriums*, Berlin-Frankfurt-New York-Paris-Wien 1991 (Traditio Christiana 8), p. xiii, notices: “Seinen eigenen Tod hat Jesus als letzte Konsequenz seines Dienstes und als Prophetengeschick verstehen können. Im Rahmen des deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbildes hatte man «die Vortellung von Israel als dem Täter eines generell gewaltsamen Geschicks der Propheten» gebildet (...) Die frühe Verwendung der Prophetenmordtradition im Urchristentum spricht dafür, dass Jesus selbst wohl die ihn treffende Ablehnung als Prophetengeschick verstanden hat”.

⁴³ The motif finds an exemplar expression in *Mk* 8:31-38, in part. 34. “Than he called the crown to him along with his disciples and said: «Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross (τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ) and follow me (ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι)»”. The passage is cited by TH. BAUMEISTER 1991, p. 22-25, as an example of the use of the theme of *sequela* in the elaboration of Christian martyrdom theology. As the scholar affirms in the introduction, p. xv, the passage refers to the theme of “Leidensnachfolge: Jünger des leidenden Messias sein bedeutet, im Konfliktfall zur Aufgabe des Lebens bereit zu sein”. See also TH. BAUMEISTER 1980, pp. 72-76.

theologies of Christian martyrdom – as TH. BAUMEISTER underlines⁴⁴ –, mainly in the context of Minor Asia⁴⁵, where the perspective of *Pascha-passio* was definitely predominant. The theme often mixes in Christian authors with the parallel “Greek concept”⁴⁶ of *imitatio Christi*, which assumes the martyrial option as the most complete fulfilment and the most perfect expression of the *mimesis* of Christ’s experience by his followers⁴⁷. In this sense, though attesting different origins⁴⁸, the terms *sequela* and *imitatio* can be substantially considered as equivalent, at least in their fundamental intention to identify the process of repetition of Jesus’ actions as the principal expression of faith and the core of the “Christian living”.

⁴⁴ TH. BAUMEISTER 1991, p. xv: “Im Judentum der Zeit Jesu gab es also die Vorstellung, im Konfliktfall müsse man auch unter Einsatz des eigenen Lebens der ererbten Religion, Gott und seinen Geboten oder dem Gesetz treu bleiben. Vor diesem Hintergrund hat Jesus im Kontext der Worte radikaler Nachfolge vom Jünger verlangt, im Konfliktfall ihm und seiner Botschaft treu zu bleiben. Nachösterlich hat man diese Forderung im Rückblick auf das Kreuz Jesu zum Thema der Kreuzesnachfolge ausgestaltet”.

⁴⁵ The synoptic theme of *sequela Christi* is reprised, for instance, by Irenaeus of Lyon in the context of the confutation of Gnostic positions. See Irenaeus Lugdunensis, *Adversus Haereses*, edd. L. DOUTRELEAU-A. ROUSSEAU, SC 211, pp. 354-357; III 18:5. *Si autem ipse (scil. Christ) non erat passurus sed avolaret ab Iesu, quid et adhortabatur discipulos tollere crucem et sequi se, quam ipse non tollebat secundum ipsos sed relinquebat dispositionem passionis? Quoniam enim non de agnitione superioris crucis dicit hoc, quemadmodum quidam audent exponere, sed de passione quam oportebat illum pati et ipsi discipuli eius futurum erat ut paterentur, intulit: “Quicumque enim salvaverit animam suam perdet eam, et qui perdidit inveniet eam” (...) Sciebat igitur et eos qui persecutionem passuri essent, sciebat et eos qui flagellari et occidi haberent propter eum, et non de altera cruce <loquebatur>, sed de passion | quam passurus esset ipse prior, post deinde discipuli eius.* (For a commentary of the passage particularly focused on the theme of *sequela* see TH. BAUMEISTER 1991, pp. 94-95). The *sequela* motif does not represent an exclusive prerogative of Asiatic communities, being also attested in “Western Latin” Christianities; see for instance the development of the argument in Cyprian, efficaciously interpreted by R. CACITTI, *Ad caelestes thesauros: l’esegesi della pericope del “giovane ricco” nella parenesi di Cipriano di Cartagine*, “Aevum 67” (1993), pp. 129-171, in part. pp. 155-157.

⁴⁶ TH. BAUMEISTER 1991, p. 55, n. 4.

⁴⁷ About the concept of *imitatio* in the reflection about martyrdom TH. BAUMEISTER 1991, pp. 53-57, mentions two significant examples. Ignatius Antiochensis, *Epistula ad Romanos*, ed. P.T. CAMELOT, SC 10, pp. 134-135; 6:2, affirms: “Allow me to become an imitator of my God’s Passion” (Ἐπιτρέφατέ μοι μιμητὴν εἶναι τοῦ πάθους τοῦ θεοῦ μου). The same term returns in Polycarpus Smyrnensis, *Epistula ad Philippenses*, ed. P. HARTOG, *Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Oxford 2013 (Oxford Apostolic Fathers), pp. 88-89; 8:1. “Therefore, let us persist unceasingly in our hope and in the pledge of our righteousness, who is Christ Jesus, who bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, who did not commit sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. But for our sake he endured all things, in order that we might live in him. 2. Let us therefore become imitators of his endurance, and if we suffer for his name’s sake, let us glorify him. For he set this example for us through himself, and this we have believed”. (8:1. Ἀδιαλείπτως οὖν προσκαρτερώμεν τῇ ἐλπίδι ἡμῶν καὶ τῷ ἀρραβῶνι τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἡμῶν, ὃς ἐστὶ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, ὃς ἀνήνεγκεν ἡμῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ἰδίῳ σώματι ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον, ὃς ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἐποίησεν, οὐδὲ εὐρέθη δόλος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ· ἀλλὰ δι’ ἡμᾶς, ἵνα ζήσωμεν ἐν αὐτῷ, πάντα ὑπέμεινεν. 2. Μιμηταὶ οὖν γενώμεθα τῆς ὑπομονῆς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐὰν πάσχομεν διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, δοξάζωμεν αὐτὸν. Τοῦτον γὰρ ἡμῖν τὸν ὑπογραμμὸν ἔθηκε δι’ ἑαυτοῦ, καὶ ἡμεῖς τοῦτο ἐπιστεύσαμεν.)

⁴⁸ A.D. BETZ, *Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesu Christi in Neue Testament*, Tübingen 1967 (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 37), pp. 2-3, identifies for the term *sequela* a synoptic origin and for the expression *imitatio* a paulinian provenance. In spite of this difference, the expressions “stehen beide Begrifflichkeiten parallel zueinander, denn beiden beschreiben in ihnen, was den Christlichen Glauben ausmacht”. See also H. CROUZEL, *L’imitation et la “suite” de Dieu et du Christ dans les premiers siècles chrétiens ainsi que leurs sources gréco-romaines et hébraïques*, “Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum” 21 (1978), pp. 7-41.

Summarizing what has been outlined, it seems possible to affirm that, through the instrument of typology, the theme extracted from *Dn* 3, already interpreted in a Paschal-sense in Jewish tradition, is introduced in early Christianities as follows:

- 1) in a “theological perspective” → to express a peculiar interpretation of martyrdom, in the light of the death of Christ, which – in turn – gives sense to the same biblical story;
- 2) in an “historical perspective” → to attribute a sense and a meaning to persecutions, perceived by communities as distinctive experiences of Christian context.

The median element between these interpretative trajectories seems to be represented by the concept of *sequela/imitatio*, that connects the historical condition of Christians to the paradigmatic experience of Christ.

2.2. FROM SEQUELA TO “IDENTIFICATION”: DANIEL “TALES” AND THE SYMBOLS OF THE CROSS

The described use of *Dn* “tales” obtains a more specific definition in some iconographic documents, where the generic reference to the theme of *sequela* appears to evolve in a punctual elaboration of the *theologumenon* of Jesus’ “incorporation” in the body of the martyr. This outcome, which represents a spontaneous development in the theology of the ancient church, is conveyed in iconography by some sporadic but exceptionally interesting details, whose peculiar meanings can be fixed through the comparison with some passages of *Acta* and *Passiones* of preconstantinian martyrs.

The element on which this exegesis hinges is represented by the symbol of the cross⁴⁹, involved in an exegetical path that leads from its interpretation as *tertium comparationis* between the

⁴⁹ This evidence is not surprising since “crucifixion” and “cross” appear to be treated as substantially equivalent subjects in paleochristian literature as A.E. FELLE, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 158, underlines, with the only difference that “il simbolo della croce, in quanto tale, include in sé anche il valore rappresentativo della crocifissione, ma la sua portata va oltre, conservando gli antichi significati e consentendone la rielaborazione in ambito cristiano” (*IBID.*, p. 158). About the representation and the symbol of the cross in paleochristian context see in part. M. LURKER s.v. “Kreuz”, in M. LURKER (ed.), *Wörterbuch der Symbolik*, Stuttgart 1985, p. 406-407 (with conclusive bibliographical references); H. LECLERCQ, s.v. “Croix et crucifix”, in *DACL* 3:2, coll. 3045-3131; A.E. FELLE, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 158-162; G. HEINZ-MOHR, *Lessico di iconografia cristiana*, Milano 1995 (Il sestante), pp. 239-40; J. DANÉLOU, *Théologie du judéo-christianisme*, Tournai 1958 (Bibliothèque de Théologie. Histoire de doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée 1), pp. 289-315 e J. DANÉLOU, *I simboli cristiani primitivi*, Roma 1997, pp. 149-159; H. RAHNER, *I simboli della Chiesa: l'eccelesiologia dei Padri*, Cinisello Balsamo 1994 (Reprint 8), pp. 461-468. For a specific analysis of the link between cross and prayer see E. PETERSON, *La croce e la preghiera verso l'Oriente*, “Ephemerides Liturgicae” 59 (1945), pp. 52–73. The study of M. LO CONSOLE, *Il simbolo della croce tra giudeo-cristianesimo e tarda antichità: un elemento della*

passion of Christ and the experience of the martyr, to its further reception as a “symbolic marker” which betrays the effective “embodiment” of Jesus in the victim’s flesh.

2.2.1. Does a “staurological pose” exist?

Before proceeding with the analysis, it becomes necessary to introduce a short preliminary reflection about the use of the cross in paleochristian context, where the symbol would be interpreted, according to the efficacious intuition of J. DANÉLOU, “ni comme instrument de supplice, ni comme signe cultuel, mais comme catégorie théologique”⁵⁰. The use of such image evolves in a range of varied options and acceptations, and this chapter will focus in particular on the connection between cross, *Pascha* and, eventually, martyrdom.

As E. TESTA in his study about Judeo-Christian symbolism notices⁵¹, the starting point in the elaboration of the cross-symbol is represented by the practice of the “sign” of the cross, connected with the rite of the σφραγίς. In *Contra Celsum*, the pagan interlocutor of Origen attributes such practice to a Judeo-Christian group, while the Christian commentator refers to it as a common doctrine in “ecclesiastic authors”⁵². According to TESTA’s interpretation, σφραγίς was “un rito di relazione con l’Aldilà, legato con la croce che veniva impressa sui neofiti”, strictly connected with the Judeo-Christian costume to impress the sign of the σφραγίς-cross on tombs, in order to accomplish “la ‘azkarah dello stesso crocifisso, il quale perciò si legava, e diveniva *presente* in quel segno, non idealmente ma realmente. Era una continuazione mistica della Incarnazione”⁵³.

This particular association between the cross and the same presence of Christ⁵⁴ may implicitly underlie the elaboration of many typical Christian expressions, such as that one of Hippolytus who affirms: “Blessed the Lord who outstretched his hands and made Jerusalem revive”⁵⁵.

Translatio Hierosolymae, “Liber Annus” 53 (2003), pp. 217-284, can be taken in consideration for mention of the archaeological *realia* attesting the diffusion of the cross-symbol. About the use of the cross in paleochristian literature: for a general and quite recent overall view see J.M. PRIEUR, *La croix chez les Pères du II^e au début du IV^e siècle*, Strasbourg 2006 and ID., *La croix dans la littérature chrétienne des premiers siècles*, Bern 2006; for a diachronic approach to the theme see I. BECHERUCCI-P. MARTINO (cur.), *La croce. Un simbolo attraverso i tempi e le culture*, Roma 2013 (Quaderni della Libera Università Maria SS. Assunta 31), in part. G. PILARA, *Il senso escatologico della croce nella letteratura cristiana antica*, pp. 169-182.

⁵⁰ J. DANÉLOU 1958, p. 289.

⁵¹ P.E. TESTA, *Il simbolismo dei giudeocristiani*, Gerusalemme 1962 (Pubblicazioni dello Studium biblicum Franciscanum 14).

⁵² Origenes, *Contra Celsum*, ed. M. MARCOVICH, *Contra Celsum libri VIII*, Leiden 2001 (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 54), p. 404; 6:27. Vd. P.E. TESTA 1962, p. 230.

⁵³ P.E. TESTA 1962, p. 231. Particularly interesting is the reference to the cross on the tombstone of Vix (Chatillon-sur-Seine), flanked by the significant inscription: *Christus hic est*.

⁵⁴ See P.E. TESTA 1962, p. 233: “A questo segno non davano perciò un valore di simbolo di Cristianesimo come facciamo oggi noi, ma piuttosto davano il valore di segno sensibile di una realtà, cioè della presenza vivificante di Cristo venturo. This is not the only meaning of this symbol according to Testa, who underlines

The perception that this symbol testifies and expresses the effective subsistence of Christ seems to surface also from *Acta* and *Passiones*: in this production, the link between the cross and the victim of the persecution often becomes a visible sign, a guarantee, a witness of the special relationship between the Lord and the martyr who “imitates” and “follows” him in the death.

One of the clearest examples certainly comes from Blandina’s martyrdom⁵⁶. In the very moment of her *expositio ad bestias*, the slave girl of the Letter of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne⁵⁷ appears to her companions under the guise of a cross, so that it was possible to see in her the same image of Christ crucified:

***Martyrium Lugdunensium* 1:41.** Blandina was hung on a post and exposed as bait for the wild animals that were let loose on her. She seemed to hang there in the form of a cross, and by her fervent prayer she aroused intense enthusiasm in those who were undergoing their ordeal, for in their torment with their physical eyes they saw in the person of their sister him who was crucified for them, that he might convince all who believe in him that all who suffer for Christ’s glory will have eternal fellowship in the living God⁵⁸.

If the same presence of the cross is enough to recall the proximity of Jesus to the persecuted ones, the assumption by the same martyr of the “shape of the cross” activates a consequent, further exegetical passage: repeating *Pascha-passio*, Blandina did not just achieve a special closeness to her

how “la Chiesa primitiva legò (...) il sigillo della croce con quelli che dormono o con quelli che sono scesi nello sheol; come pure con la resurrezione e con la parusia”, see P.E. TESTA 1962, p. 231, n. 6.

⁵⁵ Hyppolitus, *Benedictio Moses*, edd. R. GRAFFIN-F. NAU, PO 27, p. 131; see P.E. TESTA 1962, p. 232. About this passage and similar *testimonia* see in part. E. NORELLI, *Due testimonia attribuiti a Esdra*, “Annali di Storia dell’Esegesi” 1 (1984), pp. 231-282.

⁵⁶ For an interpretation of this figure see W.H.C. FRENCH, *Blandina and Perpetua: Two Early Christian Heroines*, in A.A. V.V., *Les Martyrs de Lion (177). Actes du Colloque international de Lyon. 20-23 Septembre 1977*, Paris 1978 (Colloques internationaux du Centres International de la Recherche Scientifique), pp. 167-175.

⁵⁷ About the date and the authorship of the text see C.R. MOSS, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom. Diverse Practices, Theologies and Traditions*, New Haven-London 2012, pp. 100-106.

⁵⁸ *Martyrium Lugdunensium*, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, p. 74-75; 1:41. ἡ δὲ Βλανδίνα ἐπὶ ζύλου κρεμασθεῖσα προύκειτο βορὰ τῶν εἰσβαλλομένων θηρίων, ἧ καὶ διὰ τοῦ βλέπεσθαι σταυρῷ σχήματι κρεμαμένη, διὰ τῆς εὐτόνου προσευχῆς πολλὴν προθυμίαν τοῖς ἀγωνιζομένοις ἐνεποίει, βλεπόντων αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ ἀγῶνι καὶ τοῖς ἔξωθεν ὀφθαλμοῖς διὰ τῆς ἀδελφῆς τὸν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐσταυρωμένον, ἵνα πείσῃ τοὺς πιστεύοντας εἰς αὐτὸν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑπὲρ τῆς Χριστοῦ δόξης παθὼν τὴν κοινωνίαν αἰεὶ ἔχει μετὰ τοῦ ζῶντος θεοῦ. The experience of the woman is associated by C.R. MOSS to the narration of Eusebius, who affirms, describing the death of Egyptian martyrs in Phoenicia: (Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. G. BARDY, SC 55, p. 15; VIII 7:4. “You could have seen a youth not twenty years of age standing unbound and stretching out his hands in the form of a cross, with unterrified and untrembling mind, engaged earnestly in prayer to God” (VIII 7:4. ἐώρας γοδν ἡλικίαν οὐδ’ ὄλων ἐτῶν εἴκοσι δίχα δεσμῶν ἐστῶτος νέου καὶ τὰς μὲν χεῖρας ἐφαπλοῦντος εἰς σταυροῦ τύπον, ἀκαταπλήκτω δὲ καὶ ἀτρεμεῖ διανοίᾳ ταῖς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον σχολαίτατα τεταμένου λιταῖς).

Master; she also managed to be “incorporated” in him, who in turn became present in her own flesh, so that she could accede to the privileged condition of the martyr *alter Christus*⁵⁹.

This substitution of the martyr by Christ implies the disappearance of the woman: “in her place and in her physical form” her companions “see only Christ crucified”⁶⁰, so that, in the same suffering, the perfect *κοινωνίαν μετὰ τοῦ ζῶντος θεοῦ*⁶¹ is accomplished. As direct consequence, “Blandina suffers, but (...) her reward is the opportunity of complete imitation of Christ and identification with his own perfect martyrdom”⁶².

Beside this theological outcome, another tradition concerning the symbol of the cross – apparently attested in martyrial literature⁶³ and more generically in Judeo-Christian context⁶⁴ – deserves to be here mentioned. Such speculation concerns the ascension of the cross together with Christ exiting the sepulchre, and adopts, once again, the image of the outstretched arms to elaborate, in this case, a reference to the eschatological value of the cross, conceived as the *σημεῖον ἐκπετάσεως*, that is the *crux gloriosa* marking and qualifying the moment of the Parousia⁶⁵.

⁵⁹ About this theme see C.R. MOSS, *The other Christs. Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom*, Oxford-New York 2010 and C.R. Moss 2012, pp. 112-113; about the case of Blandina see in part. p. 62. See also B. DEHANDSCHUTTER, *A Community of Martyrs. Religious Identity and the Case of the Martyrs of Lyons and Viennem*, in J. LEEMANS (ed.), *More than a Memory. The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity*, Leuven 2005 (Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia 51), pp. 3-22, in part. pp. 17-18: “The quintessence of the “theology of martyrdom” in *Martyrium Lugdunensium* is also present in the description of Blandina’s sufferings. She is a woman martyr, who after terrible tortures is hung upon a stake cross-wise...the image has the purpose to persuade those who believe Him, «that all who suffer for the glory of Christ have unbroken fellowship with the living God» (14,1)...Martyrdom means *koinonia* with God”.

⁶⁰ C.R. MOSS 2010, p. 62.

⁶¹ See R. CACITTI 1994, p. 109.

⁶² W.H.C. FRENCH 1978, p. 174.

⁶³ According to R. CACITTI 1994, pp. 105-106, this development would be attested in *Martyrium Pionii*, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, pp. 152-154 (for an introduction about the text see *IBID.*, pp. xxviii-xxx); 13:8. Λέγουσι δὲ καὶ νεκρομαντείαν πεποικέναι καὶ ἀνηγειοχέναι τὸν Χριστὸν μετὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ (the translation proposed by H. MUSURILLO [13:8. “Again, they assert that Christ performed necromancy or spirit-divination with the cross”] apparently resigns to render the rare infinitive perfect form of the verb ἀνάγω, correctly associated by R. CACITTI with the idea of the ascension of Christ with the cross).

⁶⁴ In this context it seems enough to cite, among the earliest attestations of this *theologumenon*, a passage from the Gospel of Peter, *Evangelium Petri*, ed. M.G. MARA, SC 201, p. 58 [commentary pp. 171-190]; 10:39. Καὶ ἐξηγουμένων αὐτῶν ἃ εἶδον, πάλιν ὀρώσιν ἐξελθόντας ἀπὸ τοῦ τάφου τρεῖς ἄνδρας καὶ τοὺς δύο τὸν ἕνα ὑπορθούντας καὶ σταυρὸν ἀκολουθοῦντα αὐτοῖς; about the argument see also G.Q. REIJNERS, *The Terminology of the Holy Cross in Early Christian Literature, as based upon Old Testament Typology*, Nijmegen 1965 [Graecitas Christianorum primaeva II], p. 29). Realistically, the matrix of such tradition should be researched in the lesson of Mk 16:3 of codex *Bobiensis* (see K. ALAND, *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum. Locis parallelis evangeliorum apocryphorum et patrum adhibitis*, Stuttgart 1971, p. 495). For a discussion concerning this possible origin of the theme see R. AGUIRRE MONASTERIO, *Exegesis de Mateo 27, 51b-53. Para una teologia de la muerte de Jesus en el evangelio de Mateo*, Vitoria 1980 pp. 110-111; 123-126.

⁶⁵ The expression may return in *Didachè*, ed. G. VISONÀ, *Didachè: Insegnamento degli Apostoli*, Milano 2000 (Lecture cristiane del primo millennio 30), pp. 354-357; 16:6. καὶ τότε φανήσεται τὰ σημεῖα τῆς ἀληθείας· πρῶτον σημεῖον ἐκπετάσεως ἐν οὐρανῷ, εἶτα σημεῖον φωνῆς σάλπιγγος, καὶ τὸ τρίτον ἀνάστασις. As the scholar notices about the expression *σημεῖον ἐκπετάσεως*, p. 355 n. 12, “l’interpretazione è controversa...L’interpretazione più diffusa è anche in questo caso cristologica...o più esattamente staurologica, nel senso che il segno sarebbe la comparsa della croce in cielo”.

This specific development is quite significant for the purposes of the present research, at least because it underlines and confirms the strength of the connection perceived between the cross and the human-orant pose: such association may in fact deal, in this case, with the early Christian tradition of the prayer turned to the East and addressed to the eschatological return of the Son of Man, who will come back in glory “preceduto a oriente dal segno della croce”⁶⁶. In other words, it is not too hazardous to hypothesize that the assumption of a pose with the outstretched arms during the act of praying may be also connected with the intention to reproduce and show the image of the cross, announcing the return of the Messiah.

a) *Camposanto Teutonico fragment (REP 1:894)*

The meanings associated with the cross and mainly the example of Blandina offer an efficacious interpretative key to decipher a detail introduced in the scene of the furnace on the fragment of Camposanto Teutonico (REP 1:894; *fig. 5*)⁶⁷.



(*Fig. 5*)

Here an interesting element is inserted in a traditional representation of the “figurative couple” composed of the Hebrews and Jonah⁶⁸, where the type extracted from *Dn* “tales” seems to seamlessly *develop* in the image of the ship, as if the prophet’s companions were concretely going to accede to the symbol of Jesus’ death to which they are also turning⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ R. CACITTI 1994, p. 106.

⁶⁷ Here follow some bibliographic coordinates on the document: R. GROUSSET, *Étude sur l'histoire des sarcophages chrétiens. Catalogue des sarcophages chrétiens de Rome*, Paris 1885 (Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 42), p. 84, nr. 106; A. DE WAAL, *Katalog der Sammlung altchristlicher Skulpturen und Inschriften im deutschen National-Hospiz vom Campo-Santo*, “Römische Quartalschrift” 6 (1892), p. 19, nr. 30; O. MITIUS, *Jonas auf den Denkmälern des christlichen Altertums*, Freiburg 1897 (Archäologische Studien zum christlichen Altertum und Mittelalter 4), p. 109, nr. 74; J. WITTIG, *Die altchristlichen Skulpturen im Museum der deutschen Nationalstiftung am Campo Santo in Rom*, “Römische Quartalschrift 15” (1906), p. 58, nr. 26, *tab. 19*; J. WILPERT 1932, pp. 212, 260, *tab. 176, 2*; F. GERKE 1940, p. 176, 367 VII A 26, 368 VII B I 13, 373 X 7; REP 1, p. 372, *tab. 142*.

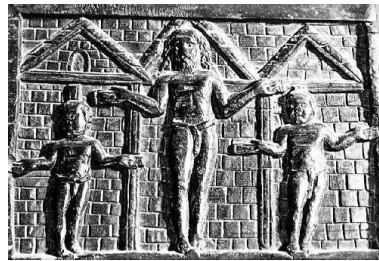
⁶⁸ See *supra*, pp. 30-34.

⁶⁹ It should be also noticed that in this case the furnace is not represented, but rather substituted by the infrequent *vivicomburium* – assuming the definition of J. WILPERT 1932, p. 260 – characterised by the

The Hebrew placed in the central position does not actually assume the common pose with raising hands attributed to his companions, but he rather keeps his arms outstretched, in a way that suggests a specific reference to the shape of the cross⁷⁰. Through the comparison with the lateral

collocation of protagonists directly on the ground, in the flames. Curiously, the same detail returns in two other representations in which the type is associated with the rest of Jonah under the pergola (REP 1:750, the fragment of Santa Maria; see chapter 2, n. 93) and with the same scene of the ship (J. WILPERT 1932, *tab.* 171:1 the fragment of San Sebastiano Museum). It is possible to wonder whether the choice of the *vivicomburium* was to some degree functional to facilitate the perception of continuity between the scenes.

⁷⁰ Among the different categories of cross, the figure of the central Hebrew seems to reproduce the so-called “Latin cross” or *crux immissa* (for a classification of the crosses see J. HALL, *Dizionario dei soggetti e dei simboli nell’arte*, Milano 1983, pp. 118-126, in part. p. 118; G. HEINZ-MOHR 1995, pp. 129-131; E. URECH, *Dizionario dei simboli cristiani*, Roma 1995, pp. 68-74, in part. p. 69; A.E. FELLE, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 158; Y. CHRISTE, in R. CASSANELLI-E. GUERRIERO [edd.], *Iconografia e arte cristiana*, I, Cinisello Balsamo 2004, p. 549). As M. FEUILLET, *Lessico dei simboli cristiani*, Roma 2007, p. 37, affirms, “la croce latina, più alta che larga, riproduce concretamente la sagoma del Crocifisso”. See also E. DINKLER, *Zur Geschichte des Kreuzessymbols*, “Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche” 48 (1951), pp. 148-172 and J. DÖLGER, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Kreuzzeichens*, “Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum” 1 (1958), pp. 13-17. The same iconographic pattern and the most significant parallel for this specific way of representing the crucifix through human body can be found on Santa Sabina’s door (*fig.* 6), apparently ascribable to 5th century, where Christ and the thieves outstretch their arms in the same attitude.



(Fig. 6)

As D. TUMMINELLO, *La crocifissione del portale di Santa Sabina e le origini dell’iconologia della crocifissione*, Roma 2013, p. 9, notices, this peculiar representation may be one of the earliest figures of the Golgotha sacrifice, “tema figurativo rifiutato dalla sensibilità Cristiana delle origini per una particolare reticenza ad accogliere l’immagine sconvolgente del sacrificio della croce” (p. 11). For a bibliography about the door see D. TUMMINELLO 2013, pp. 79-82. The cruciform pose already characterizes the representation of Daniel in lions’ den on African plates, as described by J. SALOMONSON 1979, p. 57: “Insolite est le geste de «prière» qui, par l’écart strictement *horizontal* des bras, s’éloigne manifestement du schéma d’orant habituel (avec les avant-bras étendus obliquement vers le ciel) et qui, par conséquent, rappelle la forme d’une croix ou la position d’un crucifié”.



(Fig. 7)

subjects, the pose of the central figure sticks out for its peculiarity, so that a subtle iconographic detail can be interpreted as a “distinctive element” consciously introduced in the representation to mark a gap between the common and generic type of the orant⁷¹ (represented by the lateral subjects), free and untied from particular interpretative implications, and a specific case of further exegetical elaboration. A literary example derived from Tertullian confirms the fortune of such use of the cross symbol: talking about the shapes assumed by the cross in visible nature, the author exactly cites the same human body, hiding a *tacita et secreta linea crucis* that becomes evident whenever men keep their arm outstretched⁷².

The case of Camposanto Teutonico can be considered as a figurative parallel of Blandina’s episode: a type of martyrdom, historiated next to the symbol of Jesus’ passion, does not just allude to the generic connection between persecution and *Pascha* as the fundament of the *sequela*, but more precisely denounces the effective presence of Christ “embodied” in the victim in the moment of his death⁷³.

⁷¹ The attitude of *expansis manibus* is usually assumed by scholars as a generic reference to prayer, as an allusion to salvation or to the conquest of a beatific *status* (see L. DE BRUYNE, *Les “lois” de l’art paléochrétien comme instrument herméneutique* II “Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana” 39 [1963], pp. 7-92, in part. pp. 89-91 [the author, who does not agree with the interpretation of the orant as a symbol of “supplication” – p. 91 –, underlines how “la figure humaine n’entre dans la formule que pour autant qu’elle est indispensable à l’artiste pour réaliser cette attitude et pour signifier l’être «sauvé»” – p. 89 –]; F. BISCONTI, *Contributo all’interpretazione dell’atteggiamento di orante*, “*Vetera Christianorum*” 17 (1980), pp. 17-27; P. PRIGENT 1995, pp. 108-115; F. BISCONTI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 235-236). Describing the cruciform pose, C.R. MOSS 2010, p. 62, formulates a reference to iconography and signally to orant figures, interpreted as an allusion to prayer. If the common representations of orants can certainly be associated with such meaning, at least in a generic sense, in the specific case of Camposanto Teutonico both the martyrial value of the scene, and the difference between the lateral orants and the central one authorize and even require to research a more specific interpretation.

⁷² Tertullianus, *Ad Nationes*, edd. A. REIFFERSCHIED-G. WISSOWA, CSEL 20, p. 82; 1:12. See also H. RAHNER 1994, p. 645.

⁷³ The same concept of the presence of Christ *in* the martyr, so clearly expressed in literary sources by the case of Blandina, seems to emerge also from *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*. Turning to Felicitas suffering “the natural difficulty of an eight months’ delivery”, the prison guard tells the woman: “You suffer so much now, what will you do when you are tossed to the beasts?”. The martyr fearlessly answers: “What I am suffering now... I suffer by myself. But then another will be inside me who will suffer for me, just as I shall be suffering for him” (*Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, pp. 122-125; 15:5. *Et cum pro natali difficultate octavi mensis in partu laborans doleret, ait illi quidam ex ministris cataractorum: “Quae sic modo doles, quid facies obiecta bestiis, quas contempsisti cum sacrificare noluisti?”* 6. *Et illa respondit: “Modo ego patior quod patior; illic autem alius erit in me qui patietur pro me, quia et ego pro illo passura sum”*).

2.2.2. The cross and the ship

Human body represents just one of different subjects interpreted in ancient Christianities as a cryptic – but still widespread and renown – allusion to the cross⁷⁴. Among them, one of the most diffused and richest under a semantic point of view is certainly that one of the ship, and mainly that one of the ship's mast. The deep and articulated elaboration of these symbols has been widely studied by scholars⁷⁵; in this context, among the mass of literary attestations coming from every latitude of early communities⁷⁶, it is particularly interesting to shortly recall the case of Hippolytus, who explicitly interprets the mast as a symbol of the cross, in the context of a wider exposition of a nautical allegory of the church. The metaphor deserves to be analysed here in some of its most significant details:

- the ship is a symbol of Christian community in the specific dimension of the persecution, which harasses it as a sea storm⁷⁷;
- the mast of the ship is the cross, characterised as a trophy against death⁷⁸;

⁷⁴ For an overall view concerning these ways of representing the cross see J. DANIELOU 1958, pp. 289-315; H. RAHNER 1994, pp. 511-736.

⁷⁵ The pages dedicated to the theme by H. RAHNER 1994, pp. 511-736, remain the most accurate and generous contribution. The scholar delineates the role of the ship-symbol in extra-Christian contexts, with particular attention to ancient Greek world; he also presents and in-depth analysis concerning the reception of such tradition in early communities. He firstly underlines the ancient core of the association, from which Christian literature seems to have derived its principal contents: both the ship and the cross are made of wood and iron nails (in part. pp. 515 and 581), which evoke the idea of the death from crucifixion (p. 590). The author dedicates the entire, following chapter to the mast of the ship, representing a more specific reference to the cross (pp. 611-689). About the central role of the cross symbolism in ancient Christianity see also J. DANIELOU 1997, pp. 76-77. About the meaning of the mast see also J. DANIELOU 1958, pp. 298-300; B. BAGATTI-E. TESTA, *Il golgota e la croce. Ricerche storico archeologiche*, Gerusalemme 1984 (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. Collectio minor 21), pp. 96-98; G. HEINZ-MOHR 1995, pp. 239-40; L. GAMBASSI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 228-230, where it is possible to read: “Nei cd. Cataloghi delle navi [...] l'edificazione della chiesa viene paragonata alle funzioni e all'equipaggio di una nave; albero maestro e *tropaion* per forma e materiale sono paragonati alla croce, lo “spregevole legno”, e l'albero-croce, conducendo la chiesa alla patria eterna, diventa simbolo di vittoria...”. About the interpretation of the mast of the ship as a symbol of the “prophetic typology of the cross” in Judeo-Christian symbolism see P.E. TESTA 1962 pp. 267-270.

⁷⁶ For an introduction about the literary recurrence of the theme see H. RAHNER 1994, pp. 636-689 and R. CACITTI 1994, pp. 107-108.

⁷⁷ Hippolytus, *De Antichristo*, ed. E. NORELLI, *L'Anticristo. De Antichristo*, Firenze 1987, pp. 138-141; 59:1. “Who if not us are those people who, believing in God's Son, are persecuted and trampled on by impious and cruel men? «Sail of ships» are actually the churches; «sea» is the world, in which the church, as a vessel in the sea, is thrown by the storm, but does not sink”. (59:1. <...> ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς οἵτινες ἐλπίζοντες εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ διωκόμεθα καταπατούμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀπίστων καὶ πονηρῶν ἀνθρώπων. «Πλοίων γὰρ πτέρυγες» εἰσιν αἱ ἐκκλησίαι· «θάλασσα» δέ ἐστιν ὁ κόσμος, ἐν ᾧ ἡ ἐκκλησία ὡς ναὺς ἐν πελάγει χειμάζεται μὲν ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπόλλυται.)

⁷⁸ *IBID.*; 59:1. “It has in fact with itself the skilled helmsman Christ. It also holds in the middle the trophy against death, since it proceeds together with the cross of the Lord” (59:1. Ἐχει γὰρ μεθ' ἑαυτῆς τὸν ἔμπειρον

- the staircase leading to the top of the mast is another sign of Christ’s passion, while the sails that intersect the mast in the top are “prophets, martyrs and apostles” going toward the eschatological rest⁷⁹.

In Hippolytus’ interpretation, the image of the cross, alluded by the mast of the ship, appears to be involved in a complex elaboration whose principal coordinates are also passion and martyrdom. The strong association between these elements also emerges from the symbolic mention of the ship-sail in the literary and exegetical peak of the description of bishop Polycarp’s death⁸⁰:

***Martyrium Polycarpi* 15:1.** He had offered up the “Amen” and finished his prayer, and the men [attending] the pyre lit the fire. A great flame blazed forth and we, to whom it was granted to see, saw the miracle. And we were preserved to announce to the rest the things that happened. **2.** For the fire made the form of a vault, as a ship’s sail filled by the wind, walling around the body of the martyr. And he was in the middle not as burning flesh, but as baking bread, or as gold and silver refined in a furnace. And from it we perceived such a delightful fragrance, like a waft of incense or some other of the precious spices⁸¹.

Considering what has already been affirmed about the role of the cross as a “marker” of the effective presence of Christ, and in the light of the detailed exposition of Hippolytus about the function of the ship as a symbol of the cross, the apparition at the moment of Polycarp’s martyrdom

κυβερνήτην Χριστόν. Φέρει δὲ ἐν μέσῳ καὶ τὸ τρόπαιον τὸ κατὰ τοῦ θανάτου, ὡς τὸν σταυρὸν τοῦ κυρίου μεθ’ ἑαυτῆς βαστάζουσα.)

⁷⁹ *IBID.*; 59:2. “There is also a stair that leads toward the top of the mast, as a symbol of Christ’s passion, that guides the believer in the ascent to the skies. The sails that intersect the mast in the top are ranks of prophets, martyrs and apostles, who rest in the kingdom of Christ (59:2. Κλίμαξ δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ εἰς ὕψος ἐπὶ τὸ κέρας ἀνάγουσα ὡς εἰκὼν σημείου πάθους Χριστοῦ, ἔλκουσα τοὺς πιστοὺς εἰς ἀνάβασιν οὐρανῶν. Ψίφαροι δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ κέρας ἐφ’ ὕψηλῳ ἐνούμενοι ὡς τάξεις προφητῶν μαρτύρων τε καὶ ἀποστόλων εἰς βασιλείαν Χριστοῦ ἀναπαύμενοι). For a philological commentary about section 59, with particular attention to the delicate problem concerning the probable corruption of the original term σίφαροι in ψίφαροι, see E. NORELLI (ed.) 1987, pp. 252-254. For a survey about the nautical lexicon used by Hippolytus, apart from the already cited H. RAHNER 1994, in part. p. 649, it seems efficacious to also recall F.J. DÖLGER, Sol, salutis. *Gebet und Gesang im christlichen Altertum, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Ostung in Gebet und Liturgie* Münster in Westf. 1925 (Liturgiegeschichtliche Forschungen 4/5), pp. 272-286 (“Das Schiff der Kirche auf der Fahrt gen Sonnenaufgang”).

⁸⁰ H. MUSURILLO (ed.) 1972, p. xiii. About this document see *infra*, pp. 60-70.

⁸¹ *Martyrium Polycarpi*, ed. P. HARTOG 2013, pp. 260-261; 15:1. Αναπέμφαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ τὸ ἀκμήν καὶ πληρώσαντος τὴν εὐχήν, οἱ τοῦ πυρὸς ἄνθρωποι ἐξήψαν τὸ πῦρ. μεγάλης δὲ ἐκλαμψάσης φλογός, θαῦμα εἶδομεν, οἷς ἰδεῖν ἐδόθη· οἱ καὶ ἐτηρήθημεν εἰς τὸ ἀναγγεῖλαι τοῖς λοιποῖς τὰ γενόμενα. 2. Τὸ γὰρ πῦρ καμάρας εἶδος ποιῆσαν ὥσπερ ὀθόνη πλοίου ὑπὸ πνεύματος πληρουμένη, κύκλῳ περιετείχισεν τὸ σῶμα τοῦ μάρτυρος· καὶ ἦν μέσον οὐχ ὡς σὰρξ καιομένη ἀλλ’ ὡς ἄρτος ὀπτώμενος ἢ ὡς χρυσὸς καὶ ἄργυρος ἐν καμίνῳ πυρούμενος. καὶ γὰρ εὐωδίας τοσαύτης ἀντελαβόμεθα ὡς λιβανωτοῦ πνέοντος ἢ ἄλλου τινὸς τῶν τιμίων ἀρωμάτων.

can certainly be recognized as an allusion to the “incorporation” of the bishop’s flesh in Christ, who is present at the moment of the death and “substitutes” the same victim⁸²: this theological development may explain the insisted mention of a vault “walling around” the body of the martyr, as to “include” and “absorb” it in the same presence of Christ⁸³.

a) *Velletri tombstone (REP 2:242)*

The exegetical value of the conclusive image evoked in *Martyrium Policarpi* allows to introduce a specific interpretation of a document in which the symbol of the cross, alluded by a ship mast, is connected with a representation extracted from *Dn* “tales”.

As has been noticed, the association between the scene of Jonah’s ship and that one of Daniel in the lions’ den can be considered as a marginal phenomenon, at least under a quantitative point of view, if compared with the much more diffused figurative couple formed by the prophetic cycle and the scene of the Hebrews⁸⁴. Notwithstanding this, among these cases, the representation on Velletri tombstone (REP 2:242; *fig.* 8)⁸⁵, commonly assigned to the very beginning of the 4th century, sticks out and imposes for its peculiarities.

The program of the document can be certainly considered as a *unicum* in paleochristian panorama, not just due to the theological richness of the contents elaborated, but also to its iconographic specificities. Since the complete and systematic description of the tombstone would imply an excessive deviation from the topic of the present research, it seems efficacious – after

⁸² For a more comprehensive interpretation of the “Quartodeciman elements” in Polycarp’s martyrdom see R. CACITTI 1994, in part. pp. 64-79 and 106-107. The scholar underlines that the image of the ship should be interpreted as one of those “croci dissimulate...di cui è ricca la tradizione paleocristiana”.

⁸³ Such theological elaboration allows at the same time to better understand the “transformation” of Polycarp’s flesh in bread, see *infra*, pp. 71-75.

⁸⁴ See *supra*, pp. 30-34.

⁸⁵ REP 2:242. Here follows a short bibliography: R. GARRUCCI, *Storia dell’arte cristiana nei primi otto secoli della Chiesa*, V, Prato 1879, *tab.* 347, 4; G. SCHNEIDER, *Monumenti e le memorie cristiane di Velletri*, “Nuovo Bullettino di Archeologia Cristiana” 7 (1901), *tab.* 271, 10; L. VON SYBEL, *Christliche Antike*, II, Marburg 1909, pp. 125, 134, 175; W. COOK, *Earliest Panels of Catalonia (V)*, “Art Bulletin” 10 (1927-1928), p. 154, n. 9; J. WILPERT 1929, pp. 9, 59, 131, *tab.* 4, 3; J. WILPERT 1932, pp. 207, 223, 258; H.U. VON SCHÖNEBECK, *Die christlichen Paradeisossarkophage*, “Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana” 14 (1937), p. 338; F. GERKE 1940, *tab.* 6, 2; G. BOVINI, *I sarcofagi cristiani. Determinazione della loro cronologia mediante l’analisi dei ritratti*, Città del Vaticano 1949 (Monumenti di Antichità Cristiana 5), pp. 176-78, 304-05, *figg.* 181-82; F. GERKE, *Der Trierer Agricius Sarkophag. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Kunst in den Rheinlanden*, “Trierer Zeitschrift” 18 (1949), pp. 16; 23; 25, n. 59; 41; *tab.* 4, 8; R. DELBRÜCK, *Probleme der Lipsanothek in Brescia*, Bonn 1952 (Theophaneia 7), p. 108, n. 1 (II 19); T. KLAUSER, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage in Bild und Wort*, Olten 1966, pp. 24-25, *tab.* 7; R. GIORDANI, *Alcune considerazioni sul rilievo cristiano del Museo di Velletri*, “Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana” 48 (1972), pp. 173-180, *figg.* 1-3; G.F. SNYDER, *Ante Pacem. Archeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine*, Macon 1985, pp. 80-81; AA. VV., *Museo Civico di Velletri*, Velletri 1989, pp. 150-52, *tab.* 40-41; REP 2, p. 83-4, *tab.* 80, 2; P. PRIGENT 1995, pp. 98-99; T. MATTHEWS, *Clash of Gods. A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*, Princeton 1999 (Princeton Paperbacks), pp. 12-13, *fig.* 7.

introducing some essential coordinates concerning the general structure of the program – to remain linked to the analysis of the figurative couple composed of Daniel and Jonah’s ship, with necessary but focused references to the other sections of the document.



(Fig. 8)

The first structural element coming to light from an overall-view is the coexistence of types and subjects of different sizes, corresponding – according to the coeval habits of art⁸⁶ – with the hierarchical relevance attributed to them; at the same time, the disposition of the three large-sized figures evidently generates two big areas in which the program can be divided:

- 1) the left one, including the scene of Daniel, is delimited by the good shepherd with the beard and the portrait of the orant dead;
- 2) the right one is marked by the same orant woman and the “young” shepherd resting.



(Fig. 9)

⁸⁶ See among the others R. BIANCHI BANDINELLI, *Arte plebea*, “Dialoghi di Archeologia” 1 (1967), pp. 1-19, in part. pp. 13-14 and R. BIANCHI BANDINELLI-M. TORELLI, *L’arte dell’antichità classica. Etruria-Roma*, Torino 2006 (*L’arte dell’antichità classica*) for a generic panorama concerning Roman art and its peculiarities.

The sections apparently share the same internal structure: a clear horizontal demarcation generates two registers, a superior and an inferior one. Both the management of the spaces and the accurate elaboration of the whole iconographic program⁸⁷ allow to bestow on each section two levels of elaboration: they would be both endowed with an “internal” meaning and implicated in an “external”, mutual dialogue.

The figure of Daniel in the lions’ den occupies the whole superior register of the left section of the document, where two other types are included: 1) a sitting male figure with an open roll; 2) the cycle of Jonah, represented in the three principal phases of its traditional development (the prophet thrown from the ship, ejected by the monster and resting under the pergola). The major space in the section is devoted to the type of the prophet *ad bestias* and to the representation of Jonah resting: for this reason, these figures should be assumed as the most relevant of the left portion of the document.

The first scene with which Daniel *ad leones* maintains a figurative relation is also the smallest subject of the whole document, namely a sitting man holding an open roll with a *capsa* at his feet⁸⁸ (*fig. 12*), whose interpretation becomes possible considering his connection with the large figure of the orant⁸⁹, with which it apparently reproduces a non traditional version of the type of the catechesis⁹⁰. In other words, the tombstone owner takes actively part to the theological

⁸⁷ The structural parallelism between the sections is stressed by some details, such as the identity between both Noah and Daniel and the representations of Jonah’s pergola and Christ’s flock, on which it will be necessary to come back later (see *infra*, pp. 56-58).

⁸⁸ The detail of the rolls-box will be taken up again *infra*, p. 56. At this interpretative stage, it is enough to notice how the object, placed on the lion’s head and out of proportion to the figure of the “doctor” (it is too big to represent a simple attribute), may be considered as a sort of *trait-d’union* between Daniel and the sitting figure. It must be also noticed that the placement of the *capsa* next to the prophet may also be considered as an allusion to the complex link between martyrdom and Scripture, mentioned, for instance, in the renowned prologue of *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, where *vetera* and *nova fidei exempla* are equalized. An allusion to the same theme will be identified *infra*, p. 87, in *Passio Montani et Lucii*.

⁸⁹ If the typical attitude of the orant is the so-called *expansis manibus* pose (see F. BISCONTI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 235; see also *supra*, n. 71), the feminine figure of Velletri does not evidently represent the most diffused outcome of the scene, since she “raises” her arms instead of just “expanding” them as if she was praying. The specificity of the character does not anyway seem to evoke a peculiar meaning: this attitude may more realistically depend on the simple intention to establish a more immediate visual connection with the sitting figure next to the woman, whose size exactly corresponds with her arm’s one.

⁹⁰ As J.D. WEILAND, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 147, notices, the attribute of the chair alludes to the profession of the teacher, especially in connection with the roll, a diffused symbol of Christian doctrine (see M. BUSIA, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 274).



(Fig. 10)

elaboration⁹¹, assuming the role of the catechumen who turns to Scriptures and accedes to the teaching.

It is not too ventured to suggest that the content of such teaching corresponds with the same manifest historiated on the document of Velletri, whose reading should start exactly from the orant subject which immediately attracts the observer's look, due to both its central position and its dimension. According to this interpretation, the small size of the "doctor" may be considered as an iconographic expedient adopted to suggest its condition of "narrator" of the exegetical discourse

The typical model of the type recurs on S. Maria Antica sarcophagus (REP 1:747; *fig.* 10). The different disposition and the proportion of the figures do not impede the identification of a substantial analogy with the development of Velletri tombstone.

⁹¹ The inclusion of the members of the community in the theological manifest represents an expedient insistently applied in Velletri tombstone. First of all, the presence of a dove on Jonah's pergola alludes to the participation of the dead soul to salvation (see *infra*, p. 53). Moreover, the representation of Adam and Eve in the *dextrarum iunctio* pose may be interpreted as an attempt to connect the scene with the present condition of believers: such *unicum* creates a sort of figurative *crasis* between the common model of protoparents and some diffused portraits of the dead (the type knows four traditional variations: 1) the creation of protoparents, 2) the original sin, 3) the attribution of symbols of work, 4) the expulsion from Eden; see D. CALCAGNINI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 96-101, in part. 96. As G. GOFFREDO, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 166-168, affirms, the *dextrarum iunctio* represents the pick of the nuptial roman rite. The scholar introduces the example of Velletri as an exceptional use of this gesture [p. 167]. See also A. QUACQUARELLI, *Le nozze eterne nella concezione e nell'iconografia cristiana antica*, "Vetera Christianorum" 22 [1985], pp. 5-34, where the case of Velletri is cited together with other documents showing the typical formulation of the theme. The sarcophagus is cited again as an example of *dextrarum iunctio* in P. PRIGENT 1995, pp. 98-99]). Another figure that may be interpreted in this sense is that one of the loaves multiplication, here performed by a subject with a short tunic lacking in specific connotations.



(*Fig.* 11)

According to J. WILPERT 1929, p. 10, the scene may represent a mix between the theme of Habbakuk, generally included in representations of Daniel in the lions' den, and the traditional model of multiplication. The hypothesis is appealing, but apparently there are no evidences that allow to accept it. H. LECLERCQ, s.v. "Habacuc", in DACL 6, col. 1932, correctly underlines that "l'épisode d'Habacuc n'a jamais été représenté isolément et autrement qu'en fonction de l'épreuve de Daniel". In the very rare cases in which the subject obtains an independent development, as it happens for instance on Santa Sabina door, it is distinctively connoted by the presence of the angel grabbing the prophet by the hair (D. TUMMINELLO 2003, p. 31, underlines the Eucharistic value of the scene, though without connecting it with the idea of martyrdom). For some representations of Habbakuk see REP 1:623; 2:153:248. Considering what has been so far exposed and in the light of the complex analysis of the document, it seems here more realistic to interpret the scene as a generic allusion to a member of the community, introduced in a scene that alludes to Eucharist and whose traditional protagonist is Christ. The central role of the believers in the tombstone may be summarized by the representation of the shepherd with the flock, twice portrayed at the extremities of the document (see *infra*, p. 57). For an interpretation of the figure of Habakkuk see *infra*, pp. 71-75.

conveyed by the visual program, of which the theme of martyrdom, evoked by the figure of Daniel, represents the very first “argument”. The community, recalled by the image of the orant woman, would be the privileged addressee of such figurative catechesis.



(Fig. 12)

The other type historiated in the section is Jonah cycle (*fig. 15*), to which the inferior area is fully devolved. The conception of *Pascha* alluded by this representation⁹² focuses on both Christ’s death and resurrection, with the blatant intent to attract the attention on the final evolution of *passio* in the eschatological rest: the importance of the final landing place of Jesus’ experience emerges from the major space reserved to the scene of the pergola, whose meaning is also empowered by the addition of a symbolic bird on it, a diffused image of the soul⁹³ participating to salvation.

⁹² See *supra*, pp. 27-29.

⁹³ Many examples certificate the widespread use of the figure of the bird/dove as an allusion to the soul of the document’s owners. Among them, two cases are particularly convincing: the sarcophagus of Tarragona, where the bird is placed at the orant feet (*fig. 13*) and the Lungara sarcophagus, where the feminine character is surrounded by seven of them (*fig. 14*). For other examples see J. WILPERT 1929 1:2; 19:1; 56:3; 61:2; 62:2.



(Fig. 13)



(Fig. 14)

About the symbolic value of the bird and signally of the dove see J.P. KIRSCH, s.v. “Colombe”, in *DACL* 3:2, coll. 2198-2231; G. HEINZ-MOHR 1995, pp. 108-9; F. TRISTAN 1996, pp. 113-22. A possible parallel for the iconographic development of Velletri is represented by Santa Maria sarcophagus (REP 1:747), where three goats are placed on a pergola with a “T” form (about the symbol of cross-Tau see *infra*, n. 94). Another significant case of association between the image of the dove and Jonah cycle can be found on a Lateran marble cited by J.P. KIRSCH, s.v. “Colombe”, in *DACL* 3:2, col. 2220, fig. 3130. Also in this case it is possible to identify an allusion to the souls of community members, evoked by the image of *Christi gres*.

The principal iconographic detail that strictly concerns this analysis is the peculiar place attributed to the type of the prophet exposed *ad bestias*: if the right lion, together with the dove, rests above the pergola, the same figure of Daniel is represented above the mast of the ship (fig. 16)⁹⁴.



(Fig. 15)



(Fig. 16)

Under a theological point of view, this compositional choice, whose semantic range is confirmed by the whole program's accuracy, can be interpreted in a double way:

- in a generic “Quartodeciman sense”, as a reference to the link between *Pascha* and martyrdom. In this perspective, the symbol of the cross would represent the “concrete grounding” of the persecution;
- in a specific, restricted sense, as an allusion to the “theological location” of the martyr, who is positioned “on the cross symbol”.

According to this narrow meaning, the prophet condition can be considered as an expression of the theme of *sequela Christi*, and also presupposes an intrinsic identification between the martyr and Christ, through the *tertium comparationis* represented by the cross. Moreover, without the intention to determine any kind of dependence between sources, but with the objective to underline the richness

⁹⁴ This representation of the ship seems to reflect the scheme identified by H. RAHNER 1994, p. 616, who underlines how the mast, perpendicular to the antenna, was conceived as a reference to the cross; a clearer allusion to the same subject is provided, according to the scholar, by the intersection between the mast and the pole of the sail. The iconographic transcription of this symbol recurs in documentary evidences coming from Judeo-Christian ossuaries, where ships are characterized by antennas cutting the mast (see J. DANIÉLOU 1997, pp. 69-81). This peculiar type of the ship can be interpreted as a specific outcome of the general symbol of the TAU, alluding to *crux commissa* or *patibulata*. On the characteristics of the representation of TAU see in part. H. RAHNER 1994, pp. 692-736 and J. DANIÉLOU 1997, pp. 149-158; see also *supra*, n. 70).

and the diffusion of these theological contents, it is possible to highlight the proximity between Hippolytus' words and the example of Velletri: both in literature and in iconography, a prophet/martyr is placed "at the intersection" between the sail and the mast of a symbolic ship⁹⁵.

Another trait of possible continuity between the literary elaboration and the figurative document is represented by the concept of the mast as a "trophy". If in Hippolytus this metaphor is explicitly formulated⁹⁶, in the case of the tombstone the reward brought by the cross would be evoked by the presence of a lion above Jonah's pergola: it seems possible to say that the martyrial scene develops "between" *passio* and rest, death and salvation.

The connection between persecution and salvation is further articulated through another iconographic detail, which suggests moving the attention from the left to the right section. The figure of Daniel in lions' den corresponds, in terms of "compositional specularity", to the type of Noah, emerging from the ark in an orant attitude that contributes in creating an immediate visual perception of identity between the subjects⁹⁷.



(Fig. 17)

⁹⁵ See *supra*, pp. 47-49.

⁹⁶ See *supra*, pp. 47-48.

⁹⁷ The association sticks out also because Daniel and Noah are the only orant subjects in the whole document, apart from the big central figure whose arms are anyway raised in a sensible different way compared with the traditional pose (see *supra*, n. 89). This representation of Noah is more similar to those ones attested in catacomb paintings rather than in reliefs, where the character is commonly portayed "de profil et semble tendre les bras pour accueillir la colombe qui revient avec le Rameau d'olivier" (P. PRIGENT 1995, p. 179); it is possible to wonder whether the choice depends on the will to remark the connection with Daniel, through the attribution to both subjects of the same pose. B. MAZZEI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 230, affirms that the representative schemes of Noah are two, "sia di profilo, rivolto verso la colomba, sia frontalmente". The difference is considered by the scholar as an important *datum*: "nella prima rappresentazione, infatti...Noè tende a riprodurre più fedelmente il dettato biblico... Nel secondo caso, Noè è rappresentato proprio *sub specie orantis, expansis minibus*... In queste ultime scene, quindi, egli è semplicemente prefigurazione del salvato". The consideration of B. MAZZEI (substantially reprised in the same terms by L. AVELLIS, *Note sull'iconografia di Noè nell'arca (III-VI sec.)*, "Vetera Christianorum" 45 [2008], pp. 202-203) seems to remark the sensible conciousness in the selection of one of the two scenes. The same author further underlines the interesting cases in which Noah, represented as naked, "sembrerebbe più assimilabile al tipo di Daniele e Giona", p. 207.

The association between the types is further conveyed through another expedient: the attribute of the ark – a distinctive and traditional element of Noah representation – seems to be curiously repeated next to Daniel.



(Fig. 18)



(Fig. 19)

The object placed at the left side of the prophet, which may be considered at first sight as a simple *capsa* containing rolls, is characterized by two peculiarities denouncing its meaningful connotation: its size is once again out of proportion to the scene of catechesis in which it should be apparently integrated; its shape reminds of the typical representations of the “ark”, “employé notamment dans le sens de sarcophage”, rather than those of the box-roll, which is generally historiated as a “réceptif de forme circulaire”⁹⁸. The object may be considered as an iconographic *crasis* between the box containing rolls and the ark generally attributed to Noah. This connection can be interpreted as an allusion to the theological outcome of persecution: in a certain sense, Daniel “becomes like” Noah, namely the martyr “evolves” toward the condition of the saved one, in a way that presupposes a conception of the cross as a “trophy”⁹⁹.

⁹⁸ H. LECLERCQ, s.v. “Cassette”, in DACL 2, col. 2340. About the representation of the *capsa* see also C. BORDIGNON, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 146-147. In the description of Noah’s ark, L. AVELLIS 2008, pp. 208-212, in part. pp. 208-209, affirms that the subject “si presenta come una cassa rettangolare munita di coperchio e appare caratterizzata proprio come una comune cassapanca romana. Quando non vi sono raffigurati i flutti, poggiata su piedi che la sollevano da terra, presenta nel mezzo una toppa per la chiusura, precisa finanche nella forma del chiavistello”. The last element described by the author may represent another trait of continuity between the *capsa* and the ark. The exceptionality of this figure emerges from a quick survey of the other attestations of doctrine scenes on sarcophagi: in most of cases, rolls are represented outside of the casket or are not represented at all (as significant examples see J. WILPERT 1929, *tabb.* 2:1,2,3; 3:1,4; 7:2,5; 19:1,2; 31:5,7; 32:1).

⁹⁹ A further element which should be considered to fully understand the continuity between the two representations is the fact that the same ark of Noah is interpreted, in some Christian traditions, as a possible, cryptical allusion to the cross as an instrument of salvation (the originary *tertium comparationis* of the symbology is represented by the wood). In this sense, it is possible to suggest that the passage *from* Daniel *to* Noah also alludes to the passage *from* the cross of sacrifice *to* the cross of salvation. The most complete analysis of the ark type is provided by H. RAHNER 1994, pp. 865-923. As G. HEINZ-MOHR 1995, p. 50, summarizes: “Nella tipologia di Cristo dell’Antico Testamento, l’arca appare: come prefigurazione del battesimo di Cristo, della purificazione del tempio...dell’inchiodatura sulla croce, soprattutto della crocifissione”. See also P. PRIGENT 1995, pp. 178-187 and B. MAZZEI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 231-232.

Such connection with Daniel may represent the implicit element which allows to operate a symbolic passage from the type of Adam and Eve (historiated in the right section) to that one of Noah placed next to it: in other words, martyrdom would apparently function here as the “hidden” term of mediation propelling a development *from* the condition of sin evoked by protoplasts¹⁰⁰ *to* the salvation symbolised by the ark.

Considering what has been so far exposed, it is possible to affirm that the figure of Daniel with its martyrial value is one of the prevalent interpretative coordinates of Velletri program. Representing the first element exposed to the attention of the catechumen and, in general, of the entire community, martyrdom is connected with Jesus’ death both in a wide “Quartodeciman sense”, and through a more punctual allusion to cross. Placed below the figure of Daniel, the ship-cross actually appears to be here conceived as the fundament of the martyrial experience and as the instrument that guarantees the identification of Christ’s *Pascha* with the *passio* of Christian victims.

The other strong polarity of the document is the allusion to the theme of salvation in God’s reign predisposed for the members of the community. Together with the cross, Jonah’s pergola physically “sustains” the figure of Daniel, as to remark – in addition to the “specular” association between the prophet and Noah – the role of persecution in the process of salvation and in the “passage” of believers from history to eschatology. The description of this “martyrial journey” conclusively consists in the real content of the theological manifest of Velletri, as underlined by the large-sized figures that open and close the program.



(Fig. 20)



(Fig. 21)

The group placed at the beginning of the document, characterized by the presence of a shepherd with the beard, the distinctive attribute of Peter¹⁰¹, may represent an allegory of the condition of

¹⁰⁰ Considering what has been previously noticed about the exceptional assumption of the pose of the *dextratum iunctio* (see *supra*, n. 91), it is possible to suggest that the figures of Adam and Eve are here conceived as the symbol of the entire community involved in the same “evolution” from sin to salvation.

¹⁰¹ The exam of the iconographic types whose protagonist is Peter, such as the arrest of the apostle or the miracle of the rock, allows to ascertain the systematic attribution of the beard to this character. For a general overview see H. LECLERCQ, s.v. “Pierre”, in *DAcL* 14:1, coll. 822-981.

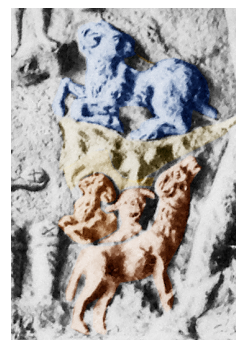
believers in history, “guided” by the apostle symbol of the communities. The young figure sealing the sequence on the right can be interpreted as a *crisis* between the traditional image of Christ good shepherd¹⁰² and that one of Jonah resting under the pergola¹⁰³, a possible allusion to the access to salvation. In other words, the scenes seem to summarize the evolution and the passage of communities *from Peter to Christ*, namely from history to eschatology¹⁰⁴. The element propelling such passage reveals to be martyrdom, whose bases are *Pascha ex passione* and eschatological rest.

¹⁰² See H. LECLERQ, s.v. “Pasteur bon” in DACL 13, coll. 2276-2285; P. PRIGENT 1995, pp. 108; F. BISCONTI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 128.

¹⁰³ Though a tradition combining these types is attested (some examples and good reconstructions can be found in P. PRIGENT 1995, pp. 168-169), the document here analysed has the peculiarity to evoke the representation of the pergola through the image of the flock, distributed in a way that reminds of the image of Jonah placed in the opposite section (the parallelism is particularly remarked by the dislocation of a single, big animal symbol of soul in an upper position). The same position occupied, in the left section, by the prophet resting under the pergola is attributed, in the right area, to the flock, that becomes the implicit destinatory of salvation and reign.



(Fig. 22)



(Fig. 23)

¹⁰⁴ The evolution from an “old” bearded shepherd to a “young” resting one may also echo the paulinian *theologumenon* of the emancipation from the “old self” (*Eph* 4:22) “to be made new” (*Eph* 4:23), remarking, at the same time, the idea of the passage from an historical dimension to an eschatological one. It becomes interesting to mention here a figurative sequence of the renewed Aquileian pavement, where it is possible to find – according to the valid interpretation of G. PELIZZARI 2010, pp. 271-274 – the iconographic transcription of a process of “rejuvenation” of a woman, probably reproducing the narration of Erma, *Pastor*, Visio I and III. As the scholar underlines, “nel simbolico invecchiamento e ringiovanimento della fanciulla...c’è un inizio e c’è una fine; c’è, perlomeno, un’origine e un’escatologia” (p. 293). Even though the Aquileian representation cannot be actually considered as a parallel for the case of Velletri, what interests here is to remark the existence of a document – whose interpretation is supported by the peculiar continuity with a literary text – testifying and using the expedient of the “rejuvenation” to convey the idea of the passage from an historical to an eschatological dimension.

2.3. THE LITERARY VOICE OF “QUARTODECIMAN” DANIEL: “TALES” IN *ACTA MARTYRUM*

As already mentioned, *Dn* “tales” are adopted also in paleochristian martyrial literature to express theological elaborations concerning the presence and the incorporation of Christ in the body of the victims. In this context, as it happens in iconography, the reception of narrations passes through a typological “Quartodeciman interpretation” that preferably involves chapter 3, with specific allusion to the episode of the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace and possible generic references to the motif of idolatry refusal.

Before analysing such exegetical outcomes, it is necessary to introduce here a short, preliminary reflection about the use of the Bible in martyrial production, in order to better contextualize the specific theme of *Dn* “tales” fortune¹⁰⁵.

As V. SAXER correctly underlines, the link between Bible and hagiography “révèle une richesse...que les notes au bas des pages ne reflètent pas toujours”¹⁰⁶, since in most cases biblical references do not correspond to “citation explicitement annoncée par une des formules classiques de la phraséologie chrétienne”, but “il y a les nombreux cas où elle se réduit à une expression ou à un mot, qui sont revenus à la mémoire de l’auteur ou du martyr d’une manière incomplète, ou déformée, ou combinée avec des passages analogues, selon les lois parfois capricieuses de l’association des idées, des images, des mots”¹⁰⁷.

At least concerning the circulation of the “haggadic”¹⁰⁸ *Dn*, another even more significant reason requires to be added to the important consideration of the scholar: in this context, the recurrence of biblical materials has often the character of a generic reprise of narrative patterns, an allusion to a sequence of events, or a global contextual proximity, that in most cases cannot be proved by the evidence of literal citations, but rather needs to be identified through an overall view that takes in consideration the context of the text rather than its single words. For this reason, it

¹⁰⁵ Concerning the use of the Bible in the elaboration of martyrdom theology in early Christianities, B. DEHANDSCHUTTER 1999, p. 20, notices: “in periods of persecutions as well as those of *pax*, the theme of suffering for the Christian faith retained its actuality – it became part of the reflection on the church as such...The Bible could be read and was indeed read as a prophetic or prefigurative “book” on martyrdom”.

¹⁰⁶ V. SAXER, *Bible et Hagiographie. Textes et thèmes bibliques dans les Actes des martyrs authentiques des premiers siècles*, Berne 1986, p. 11. This work remains the most accurate analysis on the matter. For a *status quaestionis* see *IBIDEM*, p. 11. Here follow some essential bibliographical coordinates about the theme: H.W. SURKAU, *Martyrien in jüdischer und frühchristlicher Zeit*, Göttingen 1938 (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments); M. SIMONETTI, *Qualche osservazione su luoghi comuni negli Atti dei Martiri*, “Giornale Italiano di Filologia” 19 (1957), pp. 147-155; J.W. VAN HENTEN (ed.), *Die Entstehung der jüdischen Martyrologie*, Leiden 1987 (Studia Post-Biblica 38) – see in part. U. KELLERMANN, *Das Danielbuch und die Märtyrertheologie der Auferstehung. Erwägungen*, pp. 71-75; J.W. VAN HENTEN, *Zum Einfluß jüdischer Martyrien auf die Literatur des frühen Christentums, II, Die Apostolischen Väter*, ANRW II 27/1, Berlin-New York 1993, pp. 700-723.

¹⁰⁷ V. SAXER 1986, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ About the use of this adjective see *supra*, introduction, p. 5.

would not be efficacious to merely rely on quantitative evidences in order to measure the consistence and the role of *Dn* recurrences in martyrial literature¹⁰⁹; on the contrary, their significance has to be estimated in the light of a more general reflection about the specificities and the modalities of such assumption.

Considering these points, the present analysis will try to highlight and put in evidence the features and the acceptations of this particular case of biblical reception through the exam of single cases that contextually testify the variety of the interpretations and the subsistence of some diffused approaches.

2.3.1. The “paradigmatic” case of *Martyrium Polycarpi*

The narration of bishop Polycarp’s martyrdom, transmitted in the form of a letter sent by Smyrna community to Christians of Philomelio of Phrygia¹¹⁰ and chronologically ascribable to the fourth third of the 2nd century¹¹¹, “is commonly regarded as the earliest of the authentic *acta christianorum*”¹¹² and occupies “a particular place in the development of the conception of the martyr”¹¹³. The “paradigmatic value” attributed by the scholars to this text¹¹⁴ apparently emerges

¹⁰⁹ Focusing, at this preliminary stage, on textual recurrences and considering the *data* extracted by V. SAXER 1986, p. 156, it is possible to underline that *Dn*, with 6 quotations, represents the most cited text after *Ps*, *Ex* and *Is*.

¹¹⁰ A.A.R. BASTIAENSES-H. HILHORST-G.A.A. KORTEKAS-A.P. ORBÁN-M.M. VAN ASSENDELFF (edd.), *Acti e Passioni dei Martiri*, Roma 2007 (Scrittori greci e latini), p. 4. The death of Polycarp is also cited by Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. G. BARDY, SC 31, pp. 181-190; IV 15. About the tradition of the text see B. DEHANDSCHUTTER 1993, pp. 485-498; B. DEHANDSCHUTTER, *The Text of the Martyrdom of Polycarp again (with a Note on the Greek Text of Polycarp Ad Phil.)*, “Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism” 82 (2003), pp. 101-106; P. HARTOG (ed.) 2013, pp. 167-171.

¹¹¹ The composition date still represents a debated argument, while the date of the execution is mainly associated either to the years 155-159 of the reign of Antoninus Pius, or to the years 167 or 177 of the reign of Marcus Aurelius. In this context it will be enough to assume the cautious solution proposed by P. HARTOG (ed.) 2013, p. 186, who “opts for an enhanced composition in the third quarter of the second century (rooted in earlier traditions)” and considers “a placement between 155 and 161” as “most likely” (p. 200). The author also provides a convincing reconstruction of the *status quaestionis* on both controversial points (pp. 171-186 and 191-200). The same chronological gap was substantially proposed by B. DEHANDSCHUTTER, *Le martyre de Polycarpe et le développement de la conception du martyre au deuxième siècle*, “Studia Patristica” 17 (1982), p. 659, who defends the literary unity of the document and affirms: “Les données du texte concernant la date sont suffisamment valables pour accepter qu’il a été composé peu après la mort de Polycarpe, plus précisément moins d’un an plus tard. Puisque...la mort de Polycarpe peut être placée dans les dernières années du règne d’Antonin le Pieux, il faut dater *Martyrium Polycarpi* entre 156 et 160”. About the date of Polycarp’s death see also B. DEHANDSCHUTTER, *The Martyrium Polycarpi: A Century of Research*, ANRW II 27/1 (1993), pp. 498-503.

¹¹² See G.A. BISBEE, *Pre Decian Acts of Martyrs and Commentarii*, Philadelphia 1988 (Harvard Dissertations in Religion), p. 119.

¹¹³ B. DEHANDSCHUTTER 1982, pp. 659-668, in part. pp. 663-664.

¹¹⁴ The archetypic value of this document is recalled by G.A. BISBEE 1988, p. 119, who affirms that “many theories about the origins of the Christian concepts of martyrdom and related topics are based upon the assumption that it is a historical account”. See also B. DEHANDSCHUTTER 1982, p. 659: “...ce document est

also as far as the reception of *Dn* “tales” is concerned, since the use of this materials reveals to gather all the principal interpretative attitudes and elements disseminated and developed in other documents. For this reason, it seems efficacious to start exactly from the case of Polycarp’s death to spot the principal characteristics of *Dn* circulation in martyrial literature, which can be summarized in the following points:

- the central role of the Hebrews’ episode (chapter 3)¹¹⁵;
- the coexistence of “literal”, “non literal” and “narrative” allusions;
- the inclusion of *Dn* “tales” in a reflection about the relation between Christ and the martyr.

If it is generally true that chapter 3, and mainly the episode of the Hebrews in the fiery furnace, represents the section of “tales” on which martyrial literature preferably lingers, it must be also noticed that the narration of bishop Polycarp’s persecution assumes such material in three different perspectives:

- Literal citations (*Martyrium Polycarpi* 14:1-15:2): cases in which the exact words of the biblical text are reprised;
- Non-literal allusions (*Martyrium Polycarpi* 2:3): cases in which some sections, details or moments of the episode are recalled without resorting to the exact biblical words;
- Narrative coincidences: cases in which the narrative structure of the Christian martyrdom evokes the tale of First Testament.

Critics have so far focused only on the first kind of citation here mentioned¹¹⁶. In order to analyse the second and the third category, it becomes necessary to emancipate from a static and linguistic

un des plus anciens et des plus importants textes martyrologiques du deuxième siècle, qui semble avoir influencé pas mal de documents postérieurs”. C.R. MOSS 2012, p. 58, affirms: “Treated by scholars as the first martyrdom account and as a document that inaugurated a new genre, a new linguistic category, and a new ideology, it has become the funnel through which pre-Christian noble death is channelled into Christian martyrdom”.

¹¹⁵ In most cases martyrial documents which present more or less explicit references to *Dn* “tales” cite chapter 3 and signally the episode of the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace. Apart from the cases that will be further analysed (*Martyrium Polycarpi*, *Passio Fructuosi Episcopi*, *Auguri et Eulogi Diaconum* and *Passio Montani et Lucii*), another implicit allusion to the episode of the furnace may return, in association with a reference to the story of Daniel in the lions’ den, in *Martyrium Cononi* 5, in *Martyrium Carpi, Papy et Agathonicae* 36-37 and in *Martyrium Pionii* 4:24-5:2; 4:24. V. SAXER 1986 identifies quotations from *Dn* 13:21:36-40:52-63 in *Martyrium Stephani* (p. 15), and generic allusions to *Dn* 14 in *Martyrium Cypriani* (p. 127). Expressions derived from the story of Susanna (*Dn* 13:28^o; 13:21; 13:34^o; 13:49^o) can be found also in *Martyrium Pionii* 12:5.

¹¹⁶ See *supra*, pp. 59-60.

conception of ancient exegesis on behalf of a wider, theologic comprehension of the context of the references.

a) *Literal citations*

Literal recurrences of *Dn* “tales” can be found in chapter 14:1-2: here the prayer of the bounded bishop reprises that one pronounced by Ananias in the furnace¹¹⁷.

Martyrium Polycarpi 14:1. They did not nail [him] down then, but they tied him instead; and he, having put his hands behind [him] and having been bound, he was ready for sacrifice as an outstanding ram out of a great flock, a whole burnt offering¹¹⁸, acceptable to God; he looked up to the skies [and] said: “Lord, oh God Almighty, Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained knowledge of you, God of angels and of powers and of all the creation and of the entire race of the righteous who live before you. **2.** I bless you, because you have considered me worthy of this day and hour, to take part to the number of the martyrs in the cup of your Christ, unto the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and of body, in the immortality of the Holy Spirit. May I be welcomed before you today among them, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as you prepared and revealed in advance and accomplished, you, undecieving and true God¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁷ It seems efficacious to shortly mention here the importance attributed to the prayer of the three Hebrews in the furnace by African literature. Both Tertullian and Cyprian mention it in the context of their work dedicated to prayer. In Tertullianus, *De Oratione*, ed. D. SCHLEYER, FC 76, pp. 242-243; 15:2, the case of the Hebrews who prayed with their coats is evoked in the context of a definition of the practices which should or should not be considered as expression of idolatry. In *De Oratione*, ed. D. SCHLEYER, FC 76, pp. 274-275; 29:1, the author mentions the Hebrews’ and Daniel’s prayer in comparison with neotestamentary one, which should be considered as superior. Cyprian, in *De Dominica Oratione*, ed. M. BÉVENOT, CCSL 3, p. 93; 8, assumes the prayer of the Hebrews as a good example of the simplicity and the concord which is rewarded by God; in chapter 34 (ed. M. BÉVENOT, CCSL 3, pp. 111-112) of the same work, Daniel’s companions become an example of those *iusti* of First Testament who prayed in the proper way.

¹¹⁸ P. HARTOG (ed.) 2013, p. 307, underlines how “some manuscripts have ὀλοκαύτωμα, although the meaning varies a little”. It is necessary to take in consideration since now the existence of this version that will be involved in the following exam of the citations (see *infra*, p. 63).

¹¹⁹ *Martyrium Polycarpi*, ed. P. HARTOG 2013, pp. 258-259; 14:1. Οἱ δὲ οὐ καθήλωσαν μὲν ἔδησαν δὲ αὐτόν. ὁ δὲ ὀπίσω τὰς χεῖρας ποιήσας καὶ προσδεθείς ὡσπερ κριὸς ἐπίσημος ἐκ μεγάλου ποιμνίου εἰς προσφοράν, ὀλοκαρπῶμα δεκτὸν τῷ θεῷ ἡτοίμασμένον, ἀναβλέψας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἶπεν κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ὁ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ καὶ εὐλογητοῦ παιδὸς σου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πατὴρ, δι’ οὗ τὴν περὶ σοῦ ἐπίγνωσιν εἰλήφαμεν, ὁ θεὸς ἀγγέλων καὶ δυνάμεων καὶ πάσης τῆς κτίσεως παντός τε τοῦ γένους τῶν δικαίων οἱ ζῶσιν ἐνώπιόν σου· 2. Εὐλογῶ σε, ὅτι ἠζήσάς με τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ ὥρας ταύτης, τοῦ λαβεῖν μέρος ἐν ἀριθμῷ τῶν μαρτύρων ἐν τῷ ποτηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ σου εἰς ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς αἰωνίου ψυχῆς τε καὶ σώματος ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ πνεύματος ἁγίου· ἐν οἷς προσδεχθεῖν ἐνώπιόν σου σήμερον ἐν θυσίᾳ πίονι καὶ προσδεκτῇ, καθὼς προητοίμασας καὶ προεφάνερῶσας καὶ ἐπλήρωσας, ὁ ἀψευδὴς καὶ ἀληθινὸς θεός.

The dependence between the biblical material and the passage of *Martyrium Polycarpi* is proved by J.W. VAN HENTEN¹²⁰, who underlines the points of contact between the texts through an efficacious table here reproduced.

<i>Dn 3:39-40</i>^{OG}	<i>Martyrium Polycarpi 14:1-2</i>
3:39a προσδεχθείμεν	14:2 προσδεχθείην
3:39b ἐν ὀλοκαυτώμασι (Θ: ἐν ὀλοκαυτώσει)	14:1 ὀλοκαύτωμα ¹²¹
3:39b κριῶν	14:1 κριός
3:39c πίωνων	14:2 πίωνι
3:40a θυσία	14:2 ἐν θυσία
3:40a ἐνώπιόν σου	14:2 ἐνώπιόν σου
3:40a σήμερον	14:2 σήμερον

(Tab. 2)

As the scholar highlights¹²², the association between the texts cannot actually be considered as merely literal: also in this case, the principal element linking the stories is represented by the continuity between the situation happened to the bishop and that one of the Hebrews; without considering such contextual similarity, it would result impossible to spot the literal references, and, even more so, to deeply understand the reasons underling such exegetical association. Exposed to torture for he did not refuse his God, Polycarp opts for martyrdom in a way that clearly reminds of the three Hebrews' choice: such fundamental continuity represents the narrative and theological presuppose of the attribution of Ananias' words to the bishop.

The subsistence of literal references becomes in this case nothing more than the useful evidence that proves and confirms the active perception of a connection between Daniel's companions' episode and Polycarp's experience; at the same time, this document supports the hypothesis that such connection may exist also when the exact biblical words are not assumed.

b) Non-literal allusions

A case of "non-literal allusion" to *Dn* "tales" is represented by the reference to the "coolness" of fire in chapter 2:3.

¹²⁰ J.W. VAN HENTEN 1993, pp. 700-723. See also R. CACITTI 1994, pp. 66-67.

¹²¹ See *supra*, n. 118.

¹²² J.W. VAN HENTEN 1993, p. 722.

***Martyrium Polycarpi* 2:3.** And giving attention to Christ’s grace, they despised the earthly torments, redeeming [exemption from] the eternal punishment through one hour. And the fire was for them cool, that one of the inhuman torturers; in front of their eyes they obtained to escape from the eternal and never-extinguished fire. And with the eyes of the heart they looked up to the good things reserved for those who endure, which neither ear has heard nor eye has seen, nor has it entered in the human heart, but they were manifested by the Lord to those who were no longer men but already were angels¹²³.

Though the expression here assumed to indicate the coolness of fire¹²⁴ (τὸ πῦρ ἦν αὐτοῖς ψυχρὸν) does not represent an explicit citation of that one recurring in the episode of the three Hebrews in *Dn* 3:50 – where the reference is to the angel of God who generates a wind of dew in the furnace (καὶ ἐποίησε τὸ μέσον τῆς καμίνου ὡς πνεῦμα δρόσου διασυρίζον) – the context of the passage supports the hypothesis that *Martyrium Polycarpi* is implicitly drawing from *Dn* narration: in both cases, during the exposition to fire, the sufferings of the tortured ones turn into a sort of refrigerating condition¹²⁵.

¹²³ *Martyrium Polycarpi*, ed. P. HARTOG 2013, pp. 242-243; 2:3. Καὶ προσέχοντες τῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χάριτι τῶν κοσμικῶν κατεφρόνουν βασάνων, διὰ μιᾶς ὥρας τὴν αἰώνιον κόλασιν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι. καὶ τὸ πῦρ ἦν αὐτοῖς ψυχρὸν τὸ τῶν ἀπηνῶν βασανιστῶν· πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν γὰρ εἶχον φυγεῖν τὸ αἰώνιον καὶ μηδέποτε σβεννόμενον. καὶ τοῖς τῆς καρδίας ὀφθαλμοῖς ἀνέβλεπον τὰ τηρούμενα τοῖς ὑπομείναισιν ἀγαθὰ ἃ οὔτε οὖς ἤκουσεν οὔτε ὀφθαλμὸς εἶδεν οὔτε ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου ἀνέβη, ἐκείνοις δὲ ὑπεδείκνυτο ὑπὸ τοῦ κυρίου οἷπερ μηκέτι ἄνθρωποι, ἀλλ’ ἤδη ἄγγελοι ἦσαν.

¹²⁴ If literature insists here on the “refrigerating” condition in the furnace, the iconographic documents attesting the scheme of *vivicomburium* focus, on the contrary, on the strenght of the flames. Apart from the already mentioned Camposanto Teutonico fragment (see *supra*, pp. 44-46), it is possibile to recall a document from San Sebastiano (see J. WILPERT 1932, *tab.* 171:1).



(Fig. 24)

Insisting on the theme of *refrigerium*, literature seems to stress the eschatological development of martyrdom, while the figurative source appears to be interested in showing the sufference of the martyrs.

¹²⁵ It is possible to underline here a certain resonance with the experience narrated in *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, where the exact verb *refrigerare* is adopted. In both cases the term may represent an allusion to the liturgical celebration of *refrigerium*; in the case of Polycarp, this reference may be favoured by the reprise of the image of the “dew” extracted from *Dn* “tales”. About *refrigerium* see *infra*, p. 75.

It is also possible to wonder whether the allusion to the transmutation of Christian martyrs in “angels” can be associated, to some extent, with the presence of an angelic figure in three Hebrews’ story¹²⁶. If so, it cannot be excluded that such element had been mentioned to underline and mark a trait of discontinuity between the episodes: if in First Testament the relationship between God and the victims is mediated by the intervention of an external figure, in Christian economy the same martyrs can assume an active role in the process of their own salvation¹²⁷.

c) Narrative coincidences

The third kind of *Dn* “tales” quotation – here defined as “narrative” – is certainly the hardest to investigate, since it is not supported by specific linguistic *data* and requires for this reason to be treated with particular caution. As has been mentioned, the association with the text of First Testament is in this case conveyed by a series of narrative coincidences between the experience of the martyr and that one of the protagonists of “tales”, concerning the “dynamic” of the persecution as a concrete event: such traits of proximity, which mainly involve the story of the Hebrews but in some measure touch also the episode of Daniel in the lions’ den, are the following ones:

- The refusal to adore the emperor’s Genius, in spite of the menaces of punishment (*Martyrium Polycarpi* 10:1) (*Dn* 3:1-23 and 14:23-24);
- The modality of the persecution: Polycarp is threatened to be exposed to wild animals (*Martyrium Polycarpi* 11:1) and signally to lions (*Martyrium Polycarpi* 12:2) (*Dn* 6:17; 14:31), but he is conclusively punished with fire (*Martyrium Polycarpi* 11:2) (*Dn* 3:21);
- The prayer of the victims in the flames (*Martyrium Polycarpi* 14:1-3) (*Dn* 3:24-92).

The principal difficulty in the evaluation of those “narrative coincidences” may be represented both by the widespread diffusion of these *topoi* in the whole paleochristian martyrial literature, and by the correspondence between the literary motifs and the historical developments of persecutions¹²⁸.

¹²⁶ For an analysis of this character see in part. *infra*, chapter 4, pp. 217-231.

¹²⁷ The hypothesis that the passage is implicitly evoking Daniel companions’ experience may be further confirmed by the following section of the text (2:4), citing as first example of “terrible tortures” (δεινὰς κολάσεις) the exposition to beasts (οἱ εἰς τὰ θηρία κατακριθέντες). The detail should not be interpreted as a conscious attempt to refer to the episode of the prophet in the lions’ den, but rather as a generic allusion to the cases of persecution narrated in Scriptures, with particular attention to *Dn*.

¹²⁸ For a general reflection about the development of early persecutions see W.H.C. FRENCH 1965 and G.W. BOWERSOCK, *Martyrdom and Rome*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 1-21, who affirms: “Of course, in earlier ages principled and courageous persons, such as Socrates at Athens or the three Jews in the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, had provided glorious examples of resistance to tyrannic authority and painful suffering before unjust judges” (p. 5).

In this context it is not possible to actually linger on the problematic relationship between “il martire e il redattore”¹²⁹ in the elaboration process of *Acta* and *Passiones*; it is necessary to simply mention the role of catechesis in the inner formation of the same martyr and his community, so that “non solo il martire giungeva al processo con una preparazione di fondo alla cui luce leggere le vicende che gli si presentavano, ma era esattamente a quella stessa luce che la sua comunità ne interpretava parole e che il redattore dei suoi atti le riferiva”¹³⁰. It is not actually important to determine whether and in which measure the story of Polycarp’s martyrdom traces a reliable picture of the real happenings, also because “it remains extremely difficult”, as P. HARTOG notices, “to separate factual record from *apologia* and *didache*” and to unravel “historical events from extra-historical additions”¹³¹.

The present research simply stresses, so to speak, “which of such events” obtained a space in the literary transcription and “in which way” they were reported. Considering the specificities of the genre, whose eminently liturgical character¹³² presupposes the introduction in each document of “some degree of Christian elaboration”¹³³, it is possible to suggest that the probable *realia* of the martyrdom may have influenced the perception of continuity between biblical “tales” and Christian persecutions, with two realistic consequences:

- the tendency to stress and underline such elements with particular emphasis;
- the tendency to “disseminate” in the text allusions and references to the episodes of First Testament, with which the events could be easily connected.

¹²⁹ A. ROSSI, “Mysterium simplicitatis”. *Escatologia e liturgia battesimale negli Acta Scilitanorum*, “Annali di Scienze Religiose” 9 (2004), p. 227.

¹³⁰ The problem is efficaciously addressed by A. ROSSI 2004, pp. 227-270; see *IBID.*, in part. pp. 227-230, also for bibliographical references. See also TH. BAUMEISTER, *Martyrs et persécutés dans le Christianisme ancien*, “Concilium” 183 (1983), in part. pp. 11-19.

¹³¹ P. HARTOG (ed.) 2013, p. 187. In

¹³² G. LAZZATI, *Gli sviluppi della letteratura sui martiri nei primi quattro secoli*, Torino 1956, provides a fundamental reconstruction of origins, nature and function of martyrial literature, that “nasce con il nascere del culto dei martiri, e cioè della celebrazione del *dies natalis* del martire, e vuol rispondere alla duplice necessità ad esso connessa: quella di evocare le gesta del martire e di educare gli animi dei cristiani” (p. 13). The literary consequences of such vocation are further explained by the scholar: “Gli storici del diritto hanno...potuto ricostruire...la forma tipica dell’atto giudiziario, ma nessuno dei documenti che vanno sotto il nome di *Atti dei martiri* corrisponde in tutto a quella forma. Se così fosse, avremmo dei documenti giudiziari non dei documenti letterari: il passaggio dagli uni agli altri è determinato dal lavoro esercitato sui primi e fondamentalmente consistente in tagli opportunamente operati su di essi per trasferirli dalla categoria del documento burocratico a quello di una lettura drammatica, pienamente rispettosa delle esigenze di verità che la liturgia impone perché la rappresentazione sia identica al fatto, ma al tempo stesso consapevole che essa non deve rappresentare le regole del rito giudiziario, ma la mirabile testimonianza del martire negli elementi della sua essenziale drammaticità” (pp. 27-28). Using G. LAZZATI’s words, it is possible to say that the distance separating the document from its “dramatic reading” represents the space in which biblical materials may have influenced the composition of those sources.

¹³³ P. HARTOG (ed.) 2013, p. 187.

An evidence in favour of such interpretative proposal is the fact that “literal” and “non-literal” citations of *Dn* return in *Acta* and *Passiones* reporting occurrences of *expositio* to flames, mainly in passages where the theme of martyrs’ prayer has some relevance: it becomes at least possible to hypothesize that such “contextual” circumstances activated and promoted the typological association with the Hebrews’ story, stimulating the introduction of quotations¹³⁴.

d) From “assumption” to “theological elaboration”

The modalities of *Dn* “tales” citation so far spotted deserve to be now analysed under the point of view of their meaning and theological relevance. Also in this case, *Martyrium Polycarpi* summarizes and includes all the substantial coordinates and the interpretative trajectories that can be identified, with necessary deviations and peculiarities, in the remaining martyrial production.

Concerning the “literal” citations in chapter 14:1¹³⁵, it must be first of all noticed that they are set in a crucial section of the text, namely the *acme* of the process of elaboration of the theological superimposition between the bishop’s experience and Christ’s death: Polycarp is here described through the symbolic image of a tied ram devoted to God, in a way that seems to evoke the figure of the Paschal lamb assumed in New Testament and in further Christian literature as a reference to Jesus in the sacrificial dimension of *Pascha*¹³⁶. The biblical references appear to be for this reason

¹³⁴ This kind of “narrative” dependence has already been identified by critics for the case of *4Mac*; as P. HARTOG (ed.) 2013, p. 217, underlines: “multiple scholars have highlighted similarities between *Martyrium Polycarpi* and the Maccabean literature. Lieu has collated a list of parallels, including themes, vocabulary, techniques, and imagery. She maintains that *4Mac* offers the most parallels, including extensive and broadly based common materials (cf. *4Mac* 18,21) and themes. Yet significant differences also exist, making it difficult to argue for a literary dependence”. If J.M. LIEU, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century*, Edimburgh 1996, p. 99, n. 95, argued that those parallels “establish only a common linguistic and stylistic thought world and not literary dependence” from the text, D.A. DESILVA, *4Maccabees*, Sheffield 1998, p. xxxv, affirms that the story of the persecuted bishop “resonates with *4Mac* in many particular details”. In a more generic sense, the scholar considers the text as a source for early church reflections about “the significance of the death of Jesus as a ransom for others...as an offering that propitiates the Deity...”, noticing that “although the text of *4Mac* may not have exercised any direct influence on the church...it provides a witness to parallel developments of the significance of the obedient death of the righteous”. Even though it is not possible to examine in this context the link between *Martyrium Polycarpi* and *4Mac*, it should just be noticed that the same question concerning a possible “indirect influence” may deserve at least be posed also about *Dn* (see B. DEHANSCHUTTER 1999, p. 21-22: “from the earliest times, the idea of example has been an important source for the biblical background of the Christian theology of martyrdom. Biblical «stories» such as 2 and *4Mac*, and Daniel in its Judeo-Hellenistic expansion, furnished «models» for Christian behaviour in suffering and persecution”). See also S. DÉLÉANI, *Une typologie du martyr chrétien: La Passion des frères maccabées et de leur mère selon saint Cyprien*, in A.A. V.V., *Figures de l’Ancien Testament chez les Pères*, Paris 1989 (Cahiers de Biblia Patristica 2), pp. 189-213.

¹³⁵ See *supra*, p. 62.

¹³⁶ About the passage see R. CACITTI 1994, pp. 66-67, who provides a short but dense interpretation: “nel racconto dell’esecuzione...il vescovo viene paragonato a «un superbo montone scelto fra numeroso gregge

involved in the core of the exegetical interpretation leading to the complete identification between the martyr and Christ, whose *tertium comparationis* is represented by the “Quartodeciman conception” of *Pascha* as *passio*¹³⁷.

The space of intersection between the biblical prayer and the martyr’s invocation is significantly represented by words belonging to the semantic field of sacrifice¹³⁸; it does not seem ventured to ask whether the author chose to cite the “ram” instead of the more diffused and connoted “lamb”, either to establish a more direct connection with the prayer of Ananias, or as involuntary consequence of such dependence.

In other words, the condition of Polycarp exposed to flames in the very moment of his death is conceived as similar to that one of Ananias in the fiery furnace, signally because both the bishop and the Hebrew, submitted to the same torture, pray the Lord in order to be accepted as sacrificial victims¹³⁹. This exegetical relation, that can be interpreted as a typological link¹⁴⁰, offers a biblical grounding to the fundamental core of Polycarp’s characterisation, that is represented by the cogent continuity between Christ’s *passio* and the martyr’s experience, resulting in the definitive superimposition between them and here expressed in the most mature way through the symbol of the ram¹⁴¹.

The theme of Christ presence in the martyr’s body requires to be taken in consideration as a key element in the process of interpretation of the “non-literal” allusion to the coolness perceived in the middle of the fire (2:3)¹⁴²: such *theologumenon* actually obtains one of its strongest and most efficacious developments in the immediately preceding passage (2:2), where it is possible to read:

Martyrium Polycarpi 2:2. But they reach also unto such great nobility that some of them neither grumbled nor groaned, demonstrating to us all that in that very hour

per essere sacrificato ed approntato quale olocausto ben accetto a Dio»: la traslazione sulla figura di Policarpo dell’esegesi cristologica che *Eb* 10,5 ss fa del testo di *Sal* 40,7-9 (OG) conduce all’immagine del martire quale agnello pasquale ormai pronto per l’immolazione, in rapporto con il cantico di Azaria nella fornace (*Dn* 3,39-40^{OG}) che può aver strutturato la formazione tipologica di quella del vescovo”.

¹³⁷ Among the different symbols and themes that can be connected with the richest speculation about “Quartodeciman Easter”, that one of the lamb (of which the ram can substantially be considered as a parallel) occupies a role of particular importance since it remounts to the very core of this theology, starting from the placement of Christ death in conjunction with lambs’ sacrifice in *Jn*. About this symbol see in part. N. FÜGLISTER 1963, pp. 48-76. It must be noticed that *Martyrium Polycarpi* is a document that fully expresses such conception of *Pascha*, as emerges from the study of R. CACITTI 1994. See also B. DEHANDSCHUTTER, *The New Testament and the Martyrdom of Polycarp*, “Trajectories Through the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers” (2005), pp. 395-405, in part. 396-398.

¹³⁸ See *tab.* 2.

¹³⁹ It may be useful to keep in mind the already mentioned connection between the act of praying with outstretched arms and the symbol of the cross (*supra*, p. 44).

¹⁴⁰ See R. CACITTI 1994, pp. 66-67.

¹⁴¹ About the literary instruments adopted to develop the association between Polycarp’s martyrdom and Jesus’ death see *infra*, pp. 69-70.

¹⁴² See *supra*, pp. 63-64.

when they were being tortured, the noble martyrs of Christ were absent from their body, or rather that the Lord was beside them, conversing with them¹⁴³.

Also in this case, a detail that triggers the association between the three Hebrews and the martyrs (the transmutation of fire in a refrigerating experience) mediates and reinforces the proximity between Christ's passion and Christians' sacrifice, here expressed through a more explicit mention of the *theologumenon* of Jesus' "embodiment" in the victims' flesh - a theme that knows an interesting development in the entire *Martyrium Polycarpi*¹⁴⁴.

The assumption of *Dn* "tales" in the "Quartodeciman interpretation" of the bishop's martyrdom may find its accomplishment in the third kind of biblical reprise, that one represented by a more generic "narrative" association between events occurred to Polycarp and those narrated in the biblical text¹⁴⁵. In this case, the typological link is not based on specific, punctual associations (such as the "sacrificial vocabulary" or the "refrigerating experience" shared by the Hebrews and the martyrs¹⁴⁶); the continuity is rather suggested by the generic "narrative frame" of events, whose characteristic moments are the idolatry refusal, the punishment with fire, and the prayer to God¹⁴⁷.

In the exposition of Polycarp's martyrdom the "narrative context" echoing the tale of *Dn* simultaneously maintains a capillary net of connections with the narrations of Christ's passion transmitted by Gospels, probably in order to present, through a mosaic of references and allusions, the portrait of a "martyre selon l'Évangile (1:1)...qui se comporte comme le Seigneur (1:2)"¹⁴⁸ and whose witness expresses the most perfect and full form of *imitatio Christi*. As P.T. CAMELOT summarizes, "comme Jésus Polycarp ne se présente pas de lui-même à la mort, et attend d'être livré (1:2; 5:1¹⁴⁹); il va se cacher dans une propriété voisine de la ville, comme Jésus à Gethsémani (5:1); il est livré par des gens de sa maison, comme Jésus par Judas (5:1), et le policier qui l'arrête s'appelle précisément Hérode, lui aussi (6:2); c'était un vendredi vers l'heure de souper (7:1¹⁵⁰), et comme Jésus encore, Polycarpe prie longuement avant de se livrer à ses ennemis (7:3¹⁵¹)"¹⁵². Other

¹⁴³ *Martyrium Polycarpi*, ed. P. HARTOG 2013, pp. 242-243; 2:2. Τοὺς δὲ καὶ εἰς τοσοῦτον γενναιότητος ἔλθεῖν ὥστε μήτε γρύξαι μήτε στενάξαι τινὰ αὐτῶν, ἐπιδεικνυμένους ἅπασιν ἡμῖν, ὅτι ἐκείνη τῇ ὥρᾳ βασανιζόμενοι τῆς σαρκὸς ἀπεδήμουν οἱ γενναιότατοι μάρτυρες τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μᾶλλον δέ, ὅτι παρεστῶς ὁ κύριος ὠμίλει αὐτοῖς.

¹⁴⁴ The argument is developed resorting to the symbolic allusion to the ship/cross and to the transmutation of the bishop in baked bread, see R. CACITTI 1994, p. 70, in part. n. 114.

¹⁴⁵ See *supra*, pp. 65-67.

¹⁴⁶ See *supra*, respectively pp. 62-63 and pp. 63-64.

¹⁴⁷ See *supra*, pp. 65-67.

¹⁴⁸ B. DEHANDSCHUTTER 1982, p. 660. See also P. HARTOG (ed.) 2013, pp. 219-221 and C.R. MOSS 2012, p. 63.

¹⁴⁹ For a comment about the passages see P. HARTOG (ed.) 2013, pp. 274-275 and 284-285.

¹⁵⁰ See P. HARTOG (ed.) 2013, pp. 289-290.

¹⁵¹ See P. HARTOG (ed.) 2013, pp. 291-292.

¹⁵² P.T. CAMELOT (ed.), SC 10, pp. 201-202.

significant elements are underlined by B. DEHANDSCHUTTER, such as the placement of Polycarp on a donkey (8:1¹⁵³) – an allusion to the entrance of Christ in Jerusalem (*Mt* 21:1-11; *Mk* 11:1-10; *Lk* 19:29-44; *Jn* 12:12-15) –, or the association between the attitude of the proconsul, who tries to save the martyr, and that one of Pilate in *Jn* 19,12¹⁵⁴ (8:2¹⁵⁵). Also in this case, the goal of this research is not to define whether the martyr historically trod in Christ's footsteps¹⁵⁶, but rather to notice how the literary source preserved and assumed such interpretative perspective in the exposition of the martyrial experience.

In this way, the perimeter delineated by the story of Polycarp represents the space in which the biblical “tales” of *Dn* meet the narration of Christ's death. The use of those exegetical resources seems anyway to contemplate a fundamental difference. On one side, the evangelical allusions appear to be exploited in order to create a specific association between Polycarp and Jesus and concern, in this sense, the protagonists of the events rather than the events themselves; on the other, the connection with the three Hebrews' story is principally based on the martyrial experiences rather than on their actors, as to possibly integrate historical persecutions within that theological horizon.

In this sense, the bishop's death is prone to a double interpretation: the “context of the martyrdom” assumes a deeper sense in the light of its analogy with the episode of *Dn*; the “character of the martyr” is forged through his identification with Christ. If certainly the configuration of Polycarp as *alter Christus* can be considered as the real “Quartodeciman heart” of the narration, the biblical reference to the Hebrews' tale offers the presupposes allowing to shape such portrait, disclosing the theological relevance and meaning of the exposition to flames and becoming the trampoline that activates the relation between the victim of the historical persecution and Jesus.

¹⁵³ See P. HARTOG (ed.) 2013, pp. 292-293.

¹⁵⁴ B. DEHANDSCHUTTER 1982, pp. 659, 661. The assumption of an exegetical technique “disseminating” allusions to Scriptures without lingering either on a more developed interpretation or on a clearer explanation of them, apparently characterizes also the approach to *Dn* “tales”: they actually seem to be cryptically evoked without recurring to explicit affirmations or literal quotations. In this case, the quantitative consistence of “possible” allusions becomes the diriment element allowing, at least, to grasp and hypothesize the dependence of the text from the biblical book.

¹⁵⁵ See P. HARTOG (ed.) 2013, pp. 293-294.

¹⁵⁶ About the argument see in part. H. VON CAMPENHAUSEN, *Bearbeitungen und Interpolationen des Polycarpismartyriums*, Heidelberg 1957.

e) Excursus: *from typology to cult. The “bread” and the martyr*

It must be finally underlined that the process of superimposition between Christ and Polycarp and the perfect accomplishment of their *koinonia* is clearly revealed by the allusion to the smell of baked bread during the description of the bishop’s passion (“And he was within it not as burning flesh but rather as bread baked [ὡς ἄρτος ὀπτώμενος]”)¹⁵⁷. The detail can be considered as a reference to Eucharistic species, into which the same martyr is transformed through the *trait d’union* represented, once again, by the sacrificial dimension of *Pascha*¹⁵⁸.

Even though the allusion does not imply any specific mention of the Hebrews’ story, such theological development knows a possible, interesting parallel in a specific iconographic formulation of Daniel in the lions’ den type. Beside the most diffused and essential elaboration of the scene, that simply presents the naked prophet between lions¹⁵⁹, another well attested tradition includes in the scheme the figure of Habakkuk offering bread to the prophet, sometimes accompanied by a third subject (the angel?¹⁶⁰) that “balances” the structure of the composition, as it paradigmatically happens on San Callisto sarcophagus (REP 1:364; *fig. 25*).



(*Fig. 25*)

¹⁵⁷ *Martyrium Polycarpi* 15:2, see *supra*, p. 48. B. DEHANDSCHUTTER 1982, pp. 663-664, affirms that “l’auteur du *Martyrium Polycarpi* fait clairement la distinction entre la passion de Jésus et celle du martyr : la mort du premier ne peut être comparée à celle du second. La passion et la mort du Christ ont une signification pour le salut du monde...La seule relation entre la Passion du Christ et celle des martyrs ne peut être que leur origine commune: la volonté de Dieu”. Even though the argument certainly demands deeper reflection that cannot be conducted here, it is necessary to call into doubt the position assumed by the scholar, who substantially denies the perception of a specific continuity between Christ’s passion and Polycarp’s death, rather considering God’s will as the real *tertium comparationis* between the experience of Jesus and that one of his follower. The reference to baked bread comes actually out in favour of the conscious superimposition between the two *passiones*.

¹⁵⁸ About the Eucharistic elements in *Martyrium Polycarpi*, see in part. R CACITTI 1994, p. 66.

¹⁵⁹ A paradigmatic example remains the scene of Velletri tombstone, see *supra*, *fig. 8*.

¹⁶⁰ This is the interpretation of M. MINASI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 163. The same scholar, pp. 162-163, presents a classification of the various modalities of representation of the theme of Daniel and Habbakuk, whose meaning seems to remain unchanged.

The introduction of the character mentioned in the narration of the Greek chapter *Dn* 14:33-39, more than representing an undefined reference to salvation¹⁶¹, can be interpreted as a possible attempt to remark the connection between martyrdom and bread¹⁶², which means between martyrdom and Lord's Supper.

At least two significant evidences may support such interpretation of the theme: first of all it must be noticed that a remarkable iconographic tradition ascribable to the Theodosian period frequently places the scene of the prophet with Habbakuk on liturgic plates and golden glasses¹⁶³,

¹⁶¹ About the problem of "salvific" scenes see *infra*, chapter 4, pp. 155-157.

¹⁶² In iconographic context an Eucharistic allusion is principally mediated by both the scene of the loaves multiplication, derived from the evangelic narrations of *Mt* 14:13-21; 15:32-39; *Mk* 6:32-44 and 10:46-52; 8:1-9; *Lk* 9:12-17; *Jn* 6:1-13 (see in part. B. MAZZEI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 220-221 and H. LECLERCQ, s.v. "Pain", in DACL 13, coll. 436-458) and the representation of the eschatological banquet (see again B. MAZZEI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 134-135 and E. JASTRZEBOWSKA, *Les scènes de banquet dans les peintures et sculptures chrétiennes des III^e et IV^e siècles*, "Recherches Augustiniennes" 14 [1979], pp. 3-90). As B. MAZZEI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, p. 220, notices, "nell'arte paleocristiana tale rimando eucaristico ha assunto, inizialmente, forme quanto mai abbreviate, come la rappresentazione di un tripode su cui sono poggiati un pane e un pesce", so that the same isolated symbol of the bread activates a clear reference to *fractio panis* and to the liturgy of Supper. Apart from isolated cases, a systematic link between those "Eucharistic figures" and others derived from *Dn* cannot actually be identified, and the most relevant allusion to the connection between the Supper and martyrdom may be represented by the introduction of the figure of Habbakuk in the scene of the den. It must be anyway noticed, in a more generic perspective, that the link between martyrdom and Eucharist has a figurative fortune, expressed by the recurring "couple" formed by the theme of the loaves multiplication and that one of Peter arrested (see documents REP 1:6, 11, 12, 14, 15, 39, 40, 369, 621, 625, 694, 771, 772; REP 2:11, REP 12; 3:36, 352).

¹⁶³ The material has been studied by J. DRESKEN WEILAND, *Reliefierte Tischplatten aus teodosianischer Zeit*, Città del Vaticano 1991 (Studi di antichità cristiana pubblicati a cura del Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana 44). Apart from the plate nr. 49, *tab.* 28, from Limassol, Cyprus (see *fig.* 26), see also plates nr. 45, *tab.* 25 from Istanbul and 97, *tab.* 54 from Algier (also mentioned in H. LECLERCQ, s.v. "Cuvettes", in DACL 3:2, col. 3211).



(Fig. 26)

Concerning the production of plates with golden figures, see F. ZANCHI ROPPO, *Vetri paleocristiani a figure d'oro*, Ravenna 1967 (Collana di quaderni di antichità ravennati, cristiane e bizantine dirette dal prof. G. Bovini dell'Università di Bologna 8), who describes the progressive phases in the diffusion of the types: during the

where the themes associated with the Supper know a special fortune¹⁶⁴; secondly, the complex iconographic program of sarcophagus from Museo Lateranense nr. 184 (REP 1:39; fig. 27)¹⁶⁵ offers interesting elements of reflection.

On this document, the group formed by Daniel in the lions' den, Habbakuk and the third subject (4), is placed next to a curious representation of three figures holding sickles (3), generally interpreted as allegories of seasons¹⁶⁶. Considering the characteristics of the iconographic source, its exegetical capacity and the strong value assumed by the symbols of grain and bread in early Christianities, it cannot be excluded that they represent, if not a specific allusion to the harvesters mentioned in the episode of Habbakuk of *Dn* 14:33, at least a conscious attempt to underline and stress the reference to Supper intrinsically present in the scene of the prophet placed immediately next to them.

The possibility would be supported by the fact that the entire sequence of figures from the beginning of the inferior register to same type of Daniel, alludes to the coordinates of martyrdom

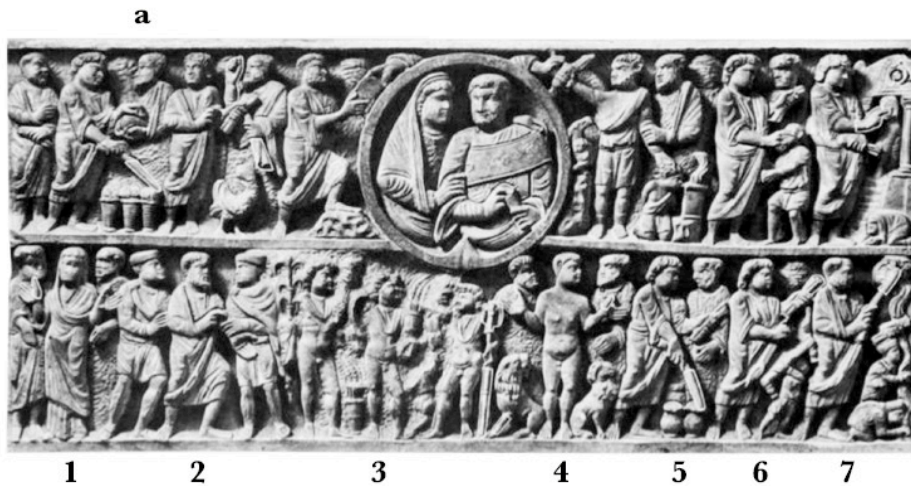
second quarter of the 4th century, themes from *Dn* appear, and particularly the figures of the prophet with lions and the interesting image of Daniel with a loaf. About this category of documents see also CH. R. MOREY, *The Gold Glass Collection of the Vatican Library (With Additional Catalogues of Other Gold Glass Collections)*, Città del Vaticano 1959; L. FAEDO, *Nuovi contributi sui vetri dorati tardoromani*, "Corsi di Cultura sull'Arte Ravennate e Bizantina" 42 (1995), pp. 311-336 and F. BISCONTI, *Vetri dorati e arte monumentale*, in *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia. Rendiconti* 74, 2001-2002, pp. 177-193. An interesting plate mentioned in R. PILLINGER, *Studien zu römischen Zwischengoldgläsern: Geschichte der Technik und das Problem der Authentizität*, Wien 1984, associating a big scene of multiplication with two types from *Dn* (the Hebrews and the prophet with lions), is probably non original and, for this reason, it will not be taken in consideration.

¹⁶⁴ See, as exemplar case, the diffusion of the theme of multiplication on such category of materials, as underlined by B. MAZZEI, in F. BISCONTI 2000, pp. 220-221.

¹⁶⁵ Here follow bibliographical references: G.G. BOTTARI, *Roma Sotterranea, III: Sculture e pitture sagre estratte dai cimiteri di Roma. Pubblicate già degli autori della Roma Sotterranea ed ora nuovamente date in luce colle spiegazioni*, Roma 1754, fig. S 201; R. GARRUCCI 1879, p. 92, tab. 364:2; J. FICKER, *Die Darstellung der Apostel in der altchristlichen Kunst: eine ikonographische Studie*, Leipzig 1887, p. 83, nr. 3; ID., *Die altchristlichen Bildwerke im christlichen Museum des Laterans*, Leipzig 1890, p. 139, nr. 184; E. BECKER, *Das Quellwunder des Moses in der altchristlichen Kunst*, Straßburg 1909 (*Zur Kunstgeschichte des Auslandes* 72), p. 34, nr. 92; O. MARUCCHI, *I monumenti del Museo Cristiano Pio Lateranense*, Milano 1910, p. 24, tab. 33:1; G. STUHLFAUT, *Die apokryphen Petrusgeschichten in der altchristlichen Kunst*, Berlin/Leipzig 1925, p. 95, nr. 47; J. WILPERT, *Sul modo di servirsi della fotografia per la pubblicazione delle opere di arte antica*, "Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana" 2 (1925), p. 161; A.C. SOPER, *The Latin Style on Christian Sarcophagi of the Fourth Century*, "The Art Bulletin" 19 (1937), p. 155, n. 12, nr. 1, fig. 4; H.P. L'ORANGE-V. GERKAN, *Der spätantike Bildschmuck des Konstantinsbogens*, Berlin 1939, p. 226, nr. 11, fig. 65; F. GERKE 1940, p. 353 II 9; E. DINKLER, *Die ersten Petrusdarstellungen. Ein archäologischer Beitrag zur Geschichte des Petrusprimates*, "Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft" 11-12 (1938-1939), pp. 40-49, tab. 3, nr. 8; F. GERKE, *Christus in der spätantiken Plastik*, Mainz 1948, pp. 9, 14, 20, 21, 23, 94, nr. 20, fig. 20; G. BOVINI 1949, pp. 170, fig. 174; 301, nr. 89; G.M.A. HANFMANN, *The Season Sarcophagus in Dumbarton Oaks*, Cambridge 1951 (*Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 2), p. 180, nr. 502; A. STUIBER, «Refrigerium interim». *Die Vorstellungen vom Zwischenzustand und die frühchristliche Grabeskunst*, Bonn 1957 (*Theophaneia* 11), p. 185; L. DE BRUYNE 1959, pp. 105-186, p. 154; M. SOTOMAYOR, *S. Pedro en la iconografía paleocristiana. Testimonios de la tradición cristiana sobre San Pedro en los monumentos iconográficos anteriores al siglo sexto*, Granada 1962 (*Biblioteca teológica granadina* 5), pp. 19, n. 30; 63, n. 106; 97, n. 36; 183; REP 1, pp. 33-4.

¹⁶⁶ In part. REP 1, p. 34.

and Eucharist: a possible reference to Susanna and the elders (1)¹⁶⁷ is actually followed by the martyrial scene of Peter arrested (2)¹⁶⁸; the subsequent representation of mowing, that amplifies and remarks the symbol of grain (3), leads to the theme of Daniel with Habbakuk (4), which can be considered as a final *crasis* between the allusions to Supper and persecution¹⁶⁹. Significantly, the prophet turns his head to another possible Eucharistic mention, this time mediated by the element of wine: the type of Cana miracle (5), characterized by a strong eschatological acceptance¹⁷⁰.



(Fig. 27)

Conclusively, the short *excursus* here presented tried to put in evidence the subsistence of an iconographic tradition that modulates and articulates the same theme implicitly alluded by the transmutation of Polycarp in baking bread. The unity between the martyr and the Eucharistic species, that seems to be expressed in iconography by the inclusion of the figure of Habbakuk in the traditional type of Daniel in the lions' den, can be conceived as the extreme outcome of a theology that assumes the martyr as *alter Christus*, and martyrdom as a repetition of *Pascha passio*.

The fortune of Habakkuk type on liturgical plates production allows to perceive the “cultural” range of such development and suggests to wonder whether the *trait d'union* between martyrdom and Lord's Supper, between martyr and baked bread, is not just represented by the sacrificial dimension of Easter, but also by the liturgical activity of early communities, in which the celebration of the martyr - that *refrigerium* to which the same text of *Martyrium Polycarpi* may in some measure allude¹⁷¹ -

¹⁶⁷ About the martyrial meaning of this type and the difficulty of its interpretation see *infra*, chapter 6, pp. 318-334.

¹⁶⁸ About the meaning of the figure of Peter see *infra*, chapter 3, n. 157.

¹⁶⁹ A significant evidence is the presence of the same scene of loaves multiplication in the left section of the upper register (a).

¹⁷⁰ About the interpretation of this type see *infra*, chapter 4, n. 117.

¹⁷¹ See *supra*, n. 125.

possibly intersected the same celebration of Christ's passion. Though the definition of the *refrigerium* modalities is a delicate and only partially accessible district of historical reconstruction, it remains at least clear that such liturgy was characterized by a "triplice intenzionalità", made of "offerta al martire, condivisione con i poveri e liturgia eucaristica"¹⁷². The integration of the Supper in the context of the martyrial liturgy represents, on one side, the fullest expression of the ancient theologies of both *Pascha* and martyrdom, and may have determined, on the other, the *phenomena* of "contamination" between martyrial and Eucharistic language and symbols, of which the cases of "Polycarp's bread" and Daniel with Habbakuk are meaningful examples.

¹⁷² R. CACITTI, *Furiosa turba. I fondamenti religiosi dell'eversione sociale, della dissidenza politica e della contestazione ecclesiale dei Circoncellioni d'Africa*, Milano 2006, p. 120. The scholar provides an efficacious reconstruction that takes in consideration the literary evidences principally coming from Augustinus, and integrates them in a wider historical frame. The convincing and still cautious reconstruction of R. CACITTI finds a further reprise in the later study about *Thaenae ara* (R. CACITTI-G. LEGROTTAGLIE-G. PELIZZARI-M.P. ROSSIGNANI 2011), which offers the occasion to fully integrate the contribution of material documentation in the analysis. About *refrigerium* see also P. GRELOT, *Introduzione al nuovo testamento, 9: La liturgia del Nuovo Testamento*, Roma 1992, pp. 52-56.

2.3.2. A “visual portrait”: *Passio Fructuosi, Auguri et Eulogi*

If the case of *Martyrium Polycarpi* offers a paradigmatic evidence of the use of *Dn* “tales” in martyrial literature, other documents testify more specific and subtle exegetical reflections.

Passio Fructuosi, Auguri et Eulogi, “perhaps composed shortly after the peace of the Church” but “surely...before 400”¹⁷³, describes the experience of the bishop of Tarragona and his companions, probably arrested on 16 January 259¹⁷⁴ and exposed to the flames to be burnt alive in consequence of their refusal to worship the gods. The description of their deaths includes an explicit reference to the episode of *Dn* 3 and to the characters of Ananias, Azarias and Misael.

As it happens in *Martyrium Polycarpi*, the citation is also in this case justified and somehow prepared by the reprise of some “narrative elements” that establish a parallelism between Fructuosus and his companions’ experience and the three Hebrews’ one. The motif of idolatry refusal, representing the prelude to the consequent punishment, knows a peculiar treatment in the *Passio* that deserves to be shortly outlined.

During the hearing, happened on 21 January (2), the proconsul reminds the bishop of the emperor’s order to worship the gods. Fructuosus denies to have been aware of such command, adducing as reason his condition of Christian, and affirming his exclusive faith in “*God who has made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them*”¹⁷⁵. If at this stage of the narration the refusal of idolatry is strictly associated with pagan divinities and their cult, the governor Aemilianus further expresses a more precise interpretation of his own request, affirming “if the gods are not worshipped, then the images of the emperors are not adored”¹⁷⁶. Through this specification the real meaning and the essential seriousness of Christians’ opposition to gods reveal to be mainly connected with its implicit consequence, that is the refusal of the same emperor’s image. The detail represents a trait of continuity with the three Hebrews’ narration: in both cases, the opposition against the king becomes the direct cause of the torture.

Coming back to the episode narrated in *Dn*, it seems interesting to notice that a specific connection between the refusal of gods and the betrayal of the emperor is specified in Θ version of the tale, where the Chaldeans, addressing to Nebuchadnezzar and accusing Shadrach, Meshach

¹⁷³ H. MUSURILLO (ed.) 1972, p. xxxiii.

¹⁷⁴ As H. MUSURILLO (ed.) 1972, p. xxxiii, affirms, Fructuosus with his two deacons Augurius and Eulogius “were victims of Valerian’s second edict, being burnt alive at the order of the proconsul Aemilian, 21. Jan. 259”. The document – followed by Prudentius in the sixth poem of his *Peristephanon* – “gives the impression of adhering strictly to the factual records”, while “only the edifying conclusion (5-7), relating the appearance of Fructuosus after death, with the eulogistic ending, might have come from a later, more pious hand”.

¹⁷⁵ *Passio Fructuosi, Auguri et Eulogi*, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, pp. 178-179; 2:4. *Fructuosus dixit: “Ego unum Deum colo qui fecit caelum et terram et mare et omnia quae in eis sunt”*. The periphrasis is derived from *Acts* 4:24.

¹⁷⁶ *Passio Fructuosi, Auguri et Eulogi*, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, pp. 178-179; 2:6. *Aemilianus praeses dixit: “Hi audiuntur, hi timentur, hi adorantur; si diis non coluntur, nec imperatorum vultus adorantur”*.

and Abednego, affirm: “they neither served your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up”¹⁷⁷. The detail does not return in OG version, where the accent is exclusively put on the denial of the emperor’s image¹⁷⁸. Neither the general mention of Nebuchadnezzar icon, nor the combining between this reference and the allusion to gods can be considered as a trace of any kind of specific and conscious dependence of the *Passio* from *Dn* concerning this argument; in the light of the successive explicit association between Christian martyrs and the Hebrews, it is just possible to cautiously wonder whether the author of the *Passio* had in mind *Dn*^o instead of OG translation, when he decided to assume in the text that exact expression. In any case, it is interesting to notice that in the tale the two facts – opposition against gods and the emperor – are apparently presented as reciprocally independent, as showed by the use of the coordinative conjunction καὶ¹⁷⁹; on the contrary, in Christian context and in the narration, their implication is stressed, through the use of a simple fact conditional with indicative verbs (*si...nec*)¹⁸⁰.

The subtle difference presupposes and contextually highlights the complex scenario of the integration of Christian communities in Roman context, where the profession of faith was perceived as an opposition against social order and *pietas*¹⁸¹; notwithstanding this, the most interesting element for the purposes of the present research remains the fact that the assumption of the Hebrews as “types” of Fructuosus and the others is first of all based on the identical cause of their punishment: the refusal of every other cult but that one of “their” God.

The second “narrative motif” that provides a contextualization for *Dn* citation is obviously represented by the same modality of the death: in both cases the victims of the persecution are exposed to the flames¹⁸².

If those macro elements can be considered as the “frame” generating a perception of parallelism and continuity between the facts, the description of Fructuosus’ and his companions’

¹⁷⁷ *Dn* 3:12^o. Εἰσὶν ἄνδρες Ἰουδαῖοι, οὓς κατέστησας ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῆς χώρας Βαβυλῶνος, Σεδραχ, Μισαχ, Αβδεναγω, οἱ ἄνδρες ἐκεῖνοι οὐχ ὑπήκουσαν, βασιλεῦ, τῷ δόγματί σου, τοῖς θεοῖς σου οὐ λατρεύουσιν καὶ τῇ εἰκόνι τῇ χρυσεῖ, ἣ ἔστησας, οὐ προσκυνοῦσι. See also *Dn* 3:18^o Καὶ ἐὰν μή, γνωστὸν ἔστω σοι, βασιλεῦ, ὅτι τοῖς θεοῖς σου οὐ λατρεύομεν καὶ τῇ εἰκόνι τῇ χρυσεῖ, ἣ ἔστησας, οὐ προσκυνοῦμεν.

¹⁷⁸ *Dn* 3:12^{og}. Εἰσὶ δὲ τινες ἄνδρες Ἰουδαῖοι, οὓς κατέστησας ἐπὶ τῆς χώρας τῆς Βαβυλωνίας, Σεδραχ, Μισαχ, Αβδεναγω, οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἐκεῖνοι οὐκ ἐφοβήθησάν σου τὴν ἐντολὴν καὶ τῷ εἰδώλῳ σου οὐκ ἐλάτρευσαν καὶ τῇ εἰκόνι σου τῇ χρυσεῖ, ἣ ἔστησας, οὐ προσεκύνησαν. The reference to the gods appears later in *Dn* 3:14, but it is again absent from 3:18. In general, it seems possible to affirm that OG version principally focuses on the relation between the Hebrews and Nebuchadnezzar, underlining in a less accurate way the connection between imperial and the religious cult.

¹⁷⁹ The detail returns both in OG and in Θ.

¹⁸⁰ See *supra*, n. 177.

¹⁸¹ The incompatibility between Christian faith and Roman empire is cleverly explained in the article by R. CACITTI, *Le ceneri di Epicuro. Eversione religiosa, providenzialismo politico e polemica antieretica nel cristianesimo delle origini*, “Annali di Scienze Religiose” 4 (1999), pp. 307-341.

¹⁸² See *Dn* 3:15:23; *Passio Fructuosi* 2:9. The same pattern is reprised in *Passio Montani et Lucii*, as it will be further underlined, vd. *infra*, p. 87.

deaths is rich of details which facilitate both a more precise definition of such connection, and a deeper reflection about the theological sense attributed to the Christian episode through the instrument of exegesis.

***Passio Fructuosi, Auguri et Eulogi* 4.2** Then he consoled the brethren; they entered on the way of salvation, worthy and happy in their martyrdom to reap the fruit of the Holy Scriptures according to the promises. They stood forth¹⁸³ like Ananias, Azarias and Misael, so that the divine Trinity fulfilled also in them; since indeed for each one standing in secular flames the Father was not absent, but also the Son gave his aid and the Spirit walked in the midst of the fire. **3.** When the bands that tied their hands were burnt, Fructuosus prayed the Lord, recalling the divine prayer and the usual costume, kneeling with joy, sure about the resurrection, while they were disposed in the sign of Lord's trophy¹⁸⁴.

Some elements concerning the translation and the sense of this concise but complex passage deserve to be detailed item by item, starting from the very beginning of the exegetical association:

- 1) *Similes Ananiae, Azariae, et Misaheli exstiterunt* (4:2)

According to H. MUSURILLO's translation ("they were like Ananias, Azarias and Misael"¹⁸⁵) the typological connection between the Hebrews and the Christian martyrs seems to be offered to the

¹⁸³ See *infra*, pp. 78-79.

¹⁸⁴ *Passio Fructuosi, Auguri et Eulogi*, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, pp. 180-181; 4:2. *Consolatus igitur fraternitatem; ingressi sunt ad salutem, digni et in ipso martyrio felices qui sanctarum scripturarum fructum ex promissione sentirent. Similes Ananiae, Azariae, et Misaheli exstiterunt ut etiam et in illis divina Trinitas completeretur; siquidem iam in ignem saeculi singulis constitutis, et Pater non deesset, sed et Filius subveniret et Spiritus in medio ignis ambularet. 3. Cumque exustae fuissent fascioe quibus manus eorum fuerant conligatae, Fructuosus orationis divinae et solitae consuetudinis memor gaudens positus genibus, de resurrectione securus in signo tropaei Domini constituti Dominum deprecabatur.* H. MUSURILLO (ed.) 1972, p. lxvi n. 27, presents a short bibliography about the *Passio*, to which it is possible to add the following references: J. MARTÍ, *L'Església de Tarragona al segle III a través de la Passio de sant Fructuós*, Tarragona 2007; A.A. V.V., *Actes del Congrés Pau, Fructuós i el cristianisme primitiu a Tarragona (segles I-VIII)*, Tarragona 2010; J.M. GAVALDÀ RIBOT, *Les actes del martiri de sant Fructuós, bisbe de Tarragona, i dels seus diaques sant Auguri i sant Eulogi. Context històric, teologia i espiritualitat*, Barcelona 2009 (Vària 236); A. DE OTEIZA-A. MUNÓZ MELGAR-N. SEGRIÀ, *Passio Fructuosi: relleus d'Antonio Oteiza*, Tarragona 2009. About archeological evidences concerning the martyrdom see C. GODOY FERNÁNDEZ, *La memoria de Fructuoso, Augurio y Eulogio en la arena del anfiteatro de Tarragona*, "Butlletí Arqueològic" 16 (1994), pp. 18-210; J. LÓPEZ, *Les basíliques paleocristianes del suburbi occidental de Tàrraco: el temple septentrional i el complex de sant Fructuós*, I, Tarragona 2006. As H. MUSURILLO (ed.) 1972, p. xxxii, underlines, Prudentius, *Peristephanon* VI, presents a paraphrase of the text. Here follows the section concerning the chapters here considered, ed. M.P. CUNNINGHAM, CCSL 126, p. 318; VI 109. *Priscorum specimen trium putares / quos olim Babylonicum per ignem / cantantes stupuit tremens tyrannus. / 112. Illis sed pia flamma tunc pepercit / nondum tempore passionis apto / nec mortis decus inchoante Christo. / 115. Hos cum defugeret vaporis ardor, / orant ut celer ignis advolaret / et finem daret anxius periculis. / 118. Exorata suos obire tandem / maiestas famulos iubet caducis / missos corporibus sibi que reddi.*

¹⁸⁵ H. MUSURILLO (ed.) 1972, p. 181.

reader as a *datum* which does not require to be justified nor motivated: the link is rather introduced by the author as the preliminary fundament of the following exegetical elaboration, without a specific mention of the reasons underling such continuity. In this context, it may be interesting to propose a sensibly different interpretative option, depending on the attribution of a stronger meaning to the verb *exstare*: putting the accent on its prefix *ex*, it becomes actually possible to hypothesize that the term should not just be assumed as a synonym of the generic verb *esse*, but rather as a more specific expression evoking the action of “showing, appearing, emerging”¹⁸⁶. If so, the same verb introducing the typology¹⁸⁷ would also offer an explanation of its grounding: the martyrs can be associated with Daniel’s companions since they “stood forth” like them – in other words, the connection would not depend on anything concerning the behaviour of the protagonists of the *Passio*, but rather on a “visual” element, that is the assumption of the same physical attitude.

2) *ut etiam et in illis divina Trinitas compleretur* (4:2)

The conjunction *ut* introduces here a consecutive clause expressing the core of the typological association between the martyrs and the Hebrews: the subordinate sentence actually presents the consequences of the fact that Fructuosus and his companions “looked like” the young men in the furnace.

The passage may be connected with the immediately preceding section, and mainly with the reference to “the fruit of the Holy Scriptures, according to the promises”¹⁸⁸: if *Dn* “tales” represent the “Scriptures” concretely cited in the passage, the “fruit” deriving from them, expressed in the consecutive clause, is conceived as the fulfilment of the divine Trinity. In other words, maintaining an exegetical and typological connection with biblical characters (which specifically means assuming the semblance of Daniel companions), Fructuosus and the others can consequently benefit from a specific relation with the divinity.

The peculiar use and meaning of the verb *compleo* in this context appear quite difficult to grasp; it is possible to wonder, in terms of a simple interpretative proposal, whether the author of the *Passio* is in some measure alluding to the presence of the *divina trinitas* in the same protagonists of the torture¹⁸⁹, in a way which would stress the connection between the present events and the story

¹⁸⁶ See TLL 5/2, s.v. “*Exsto*”, coll. 1928-1936.

¹⁸⁷ In this specific context, and in general for *Acta martyrum*, it is necessary to send back to the definition of “typology” which has been given in the introduction to the present work, in order to understand the sense in which the term is here adopted.

¹⁸⁸ *Passio Fructuosi, Auguri et Eulogi*, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, pp. 180-181; 4:2. *sanctarum scripturarum fructum ex promissione*.

¹⁸⁹ The principal meanings of the diffused verb *compleo* are both associated with the idea of carrying out, completing and bringing something to perfection (this semantic field is prevalent in the *Vulgata*, see for

narrated in *Dn*. If so, also Christian martyrs would be considered as the “completion” of *divina trinitas*, the “antitype” of the “promises” of First Testament, pursuant to their typological link with the Hebrews.

- 3) *siquidem iam in ignem saeculi singulis constitutis, et Pater non deesset, sed et Filius subveniret et Spiritus in medio ignis ambularet* (4:2)

The phrase apparently offers an explanation of what happened to the Hebrews in the flames: they obtained the assistance and the help of the already cited divine Trinity. In the light of the typological perspective expressed by the text, the specification should be as well connected with the condition of martyrs, who would benefit of the same assistance. The composition of the “trinity” is presented in detail:

- 1) Father, who was not absent (*et Pater non deesset*);
- 2) Son, who gave his help (*Filius subveniret*);
- 3) Spirit, who walked in the middle of the fire (*Spiritus in medio ignis ambularet*).

A first problem concerns the identity of “each one standing in secular flames”. Both the use of verbs in the past tense (*deesset, subveniret, ambularet*) and the adoption of the adverb *iam* suggest to refer this mention to First Testament protagonists, the young Hebrews who already conquered the salvation thanks to the divine favour and intervention.

Concerning the members composing the *divina trinitas*, just in terms of a possible interpretative proposal, it seems plausible to highlight at least an element of connection with the scenario described in the biblical episode. The “Spirit”, characterized in the *Passio* as walking in the middle of the fire, may be associated with the fourth character¹⁹⁰ showing in the furnace and walking in flames together with the Hebrews. It may be excessively daring to propose any further association between the other figures cited in the martyrdom and the divine characters playing an active role in *Dn* “tale”, but admitting a necessary identification between the “Father” of the *Passio* and the God who was not denied by the Hebrews, it appears at least possible to suggest that the “Son”, who gave his help, somehow echoes the angel of God who mediated the salvation for Daniel’s companions,

instance *Gn* 2:2, 15:16 and *Dn* 5:26; it also returns in the use of authors such as Tertullianus, *De Anima*, ed. J.A. WASZINK, CCSL 2, p. 864; 56:4. *Aiunt et in | matura morte praeventas eo usque vagari istic, donec reliquatio compleatur aetatum, qua cum pervixissent, si non intempestive obissent*) and with the idea of being fulfilled and penetrated by something. This acceptance returns for instance in Cassiodorus, *Institutiones Divinarum et Humanarum Litterarum*, ed. W. BÜRSGENS, FC 39/1, pp. 98-99; *Praefatio*, 1:7. *Subito divina inspiratione completus*. For a panorama about the meanings of the term see TLL 3, s.v. “Compleo”, coll. 2090-20-98.

¹⁹⁰ *Dn* 3:91-92.

placating the fire with a wind of dew¹⁹¹. If, on one side, this possible connection should not be considered as an attempt to develop a specific, theological speculation on the Trinity, it does not seem too hazardous to suggest, on the other, that the author of the *Passio* implicitly tried to inscribe the story of Fructuosus in a panorama of substantial continuity with the episode of *Dn*, operating a sort of “christianization” of the scene that showed in front of Nabuchadnezzar’s eyes.

- 4) *Cumque exustae fuissent fasciolae quibus manus eorum fuerant conligatae, Fructuosus orationis divinae et solitae consuetudinis memor gaudens positus genibus, de resurrectione securus in signo tropaei Domini constituti Dominum deprecabatur (4:3).*

This final section apparently represents the most interesting one for the purposes of the present research, also because it gathers and expounds the principal themes mentioned in the former passages, which are: 1) the elements on which the link between the three Hebrews and the Christian martyrs is based; 2) the nature of the link between God and the martyrs, activated by the association of the latter with the protagonists of the First Testament.

Concerning the first point, that is the core of the connection between the companions of Daniel and those of Fructuosus, this paragraph seems to confirm the essential role played by the assumption of a specific, external and visible pose, apparently presenting a more punctual explanation of the introductive expression *similes Ananiae, Azariae, et Misaheli exstiterunt*.

The first element that can be interpreted in this sense can be spotted at the beginning of the paragraph. The allusion to the fact that the “bands that tied their hands were burnt” does not just represent either a general detail evoking the strength of the fire, or a simple reference to the critical condition in which the persecuted ones were involved; it may rather be functional to implicitly underline, once again, the specific pose assumed by the victims. By affirming that Fructuosus could pronounce the divine prayer “when” (*cumque*) his hands were not tied anymore, the author of the *Passio* seems to have in mind the typical “orant” position that the martyr may have assumed in that precise moment. Moreover, the prayer of Fructuosus is described in two phases:

- he firstly “remembers” (*memor*) the prayer as an element integrated in the wider panorama of their “usual customs” (*solitae consuetudinis*);
- he finally “prays” (*deprecabatur*).

¹⁹¹ *Dn* 3:49-50.

The first phase – that one, in a manner of speaking, of the “memory of a custom” – can be interpreted both as a generic reference to the special relation existing between martyrs and the act of praying, capillary attested in martyrial literature¹⁹², and as a more specific allusion to the experience of the three Hebrews, who pray two times in the fiery furnace, according to the Greek versions of the text¹⁹³.

The second phase, concerning the effective prayer pronounced by Fructuosus, is characterized by the interesting specification of the fact that martyrs, in that precise moment, were *in signo tropaei Domini constituti*. The delicate question concerns the same translation of the expression, explicitly connected by H. MUSURILLO to a peculiar, symbolic gesture: according to the scholar, the sentence may allude to the attitude of “stretching out their arms in memory of Lord’s cross”¹⁹⁴. Such interpretative solution appears at first sight unjustified by the text of the *Passio*, since neither the word *tropaeum* seems enough connoted to hypothesize a reference to the cross, nor the verb *constituti* is sufficiently strong to describe the pose of outstretched arms. In spite of this preliminary impression, a deeper analysis of the sentence allows to better comprehending the choice of H. MUSURILLO THAT reveals to be acceptable and coherent with the scenario so far delineated.

It must be first of all noticed that the term *tropaeum* in Christian tradition is in most cases associated exactly with the cross, through a logical passage that interprets this element as the privileged and unique instrument of Christ’s victory; in this sense, the mention of the cross can be either accompanied and specified by the term “trophy”, or even directly substituted by it. The most significant parallel to the case of *Passio Fructuosi*, mainly in reason of the contextual proximity, is represented by *Passio Montani et Lucii* 4:5, where it is possible to read: *Nam et occidi servis Dei leve est, et ideo mors nihil est, cuius aculeos comminuens contentionemque devincens dominus per trophaeum crucis triumphavit*¹⁹⁵. The identification of the cross with a “trophy” also recurs in the already cited allegory of the church-ship¹⁹⁶ developed by Hippolytus, signally where the mast is presented as a trophy against

¹⁹² The typical example is represented by the prayer of Polycarp, see *supra*, p. 48.

¹⁹³ See the prayer of Azaria, *Dn* 3:24-45 and that one of the three Hebrews, *Dn* 3:52-90.

¹⁹⁴ H. MUSURILLO (ed.) 1972, p. 183.

¹⁹⁵ *Passio Montani et Lucii*, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, pp. 216-217; 4:5. “For God’s servants it is easy to be killed, and for this reason death is nothing, since the Lord crushes its stings and conquers its struggle and triumphs by the trophy of the cross”. It must be noticed that the word *tropaeum* is specifically associated with the body and reliques of martyrs in Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, ed. M. CUNNINGHAM, CCSL 126, pp. 307-308; V 399. *Sed nulla dirarum famis / aut bestiarum aut alitum / audet tropaeum gloriae foedare tactu squalido*, and in Ambrosius, where the reference to *crucis tropaea* can be found in the context of an exposition concerning the place where martyr Agricola was crucified (Ambrosius, *Exhortatio virginitatis*, ed. F. GORI, *Bibliotheca Ambrosiana* 14/2, pp. 206-207; 2:9); the term is introduced in the context of an allusion to the tombs of martyrs in Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, ed. J. LABOURT, *Saint Jérôme. Lettres*, III, Paris 1951, p. 112; 46:12. *Tropaeum apostolorum et martyrum*.

¹⁹⁶ See *supra*, pp. 47-48.

death (τὸ τρόπαιον τὸ κατὰ τοῦ θανατοῦ¹⁹⁷). Both these examples, which maintain a specific association with the martyrial theme, and the others ascribable to every latitude and every chronological stage of ancient Christianities¹⁹⁸, suggest to interpret the expression “*tropaeum Domini*” as a punctual reference to the cross.

The second critical element in H. MUSURILLO’s translation is represented by the expression “stretching out their arms”, which seems at first sight to render the participle *constituti*. Though the attribution of such specific meaning to a verb so weakly connoted can be considered as a questionable choice, interesting elements in favour of this solution emerge from a deeper reflection on the general structure of the phrase.

First of all, it is useful to consider that the same term *tropaeum* is sometimes directly connected with a peculiar physical attitude in paleochristian literature: it happens for instance in Ambrosius’ use, where the expression “*tropaeum Domini signare victoris*”¹⁹⁹ seems to allude to the act of “representing” Christ’s victory with outstretched arms in the shape of the cross. The attribution of such specific meaning to the verb *constituo* may also be supported by its association with the complement *in signo*: if the verb actually refers to the assumption of a generic “attitude”, the expression *in signo* – that is meant to specify and define it – contextually evokes three principal orders of meanings: on one side, it can be associated with the idea of an external image of a symbol of every kind²⁰⁰; secondly, it can allude to the typological connection between two subjects²⁰¹;

¹⁹⁷ See *supra*, n. 78.

¹⁹⁸ The idea of the connection between Christ’s victory and the trophy of the cross is attested, for example, in Tertullianus, *Adversus Marcionem*, ed. C. BRAUN, SC 456, pp. 254-255; IV 20:4. *Nam cum ultimo hoste, morte, proeliaturus per tropaeum crucis triumphavit*. This specific use of the term is well attested also in later tradition: the idea of the connection between Jesus’ passion and the cross as a trophy is expressed in an exemplary way by Rufinus, *Exposition Symboli*, ed. M. SIMONETTI, CCSL 20, p. 149; 12. *Unde sciendum est quod crux ista triumphus erat: triumphus enim insigne est tropaeum; tropaeum autem devicti hostis indicium est*.

¹⁹⁹ Ambrosius, *De Virginitate*, ed. F. GORI, *Biblioteca Ambrosiana* 14/1, pp. 106-109; I 2:7. The example seems particularly interesting, mainly in the light of the context in which the expression is included. In occasion of the *dies natalis* of the martyr Agnes, the author places her praise as introductory section of his *De Virginitate*. Remembering the tradition about her martyrdom recounted by Damasus (see A. FERRUA, *Epigrammata Damasiana*, Città del Vaticano 1942, p. 176), he affirms: *uel si ad aras inuita raperetur, tendere Christo inter ignes manus atque in ipsis sacrilegis foci tropaeum domini signare victoris*. In this case the representation of Christ’s sign, that is the cross, is included in the frame of an exposition to the flames, in a way that may remind of the iconographic representation of the three Hebrews and the literary context of *Passio Fructuosi*.

²⁰⁰ Remaining in the perimeter of early Christian literature, a good example of this use can be derived from Augustinus, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*, ed. R. WILLEMS, CCSL 36, p. 265; 26:12. *Sacramenta illa fuerunt; in signis diuersa sunt; in re quae significatur paria sunt*, where the term is adopted in a speculation about external manifestations of “spiritual meanings” (about the argument see E. RUFFINI-E. LODI, *Mysterion e Sacramentum: la sacramentalità negli scritti dei Padri e nei testi liturgici primitivi*, Bologna 1987 [Nuovi saggi teologici 24]).

²⁰¹ This acceptance is for example attested in Cyprianus, *De Ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate*, ed. M. BÉVENOT, CCSL 3, p. 255; 8. *Sacramento vestis et signo declaravit ecclesiae unitatem*. In order to describe the unity of Christians, Cyprian resorts to the symbol of the “undivided tunic”, alluding to the episode of the prophet Achia (1*King* 11:31-32), who on the contrary tore his own tunic in different parts, as an anti-example. Though

conclusively, in a more specific acceptation, as the already cited “*tropaeum*” it maintains a punctual connection with the cross²⁰². Considering that in the same paragraph Fructuosus is portrayed with the pose of the “orant”²⁰³, it becomes possible to hypothesize that the sentence represents a specific allusion to the assumption, also by his companions, of an attitude that symbolizes the cross that is with outstretched arms.

Another element provided by Prudentius should be added to such considerations. In the context of his paraphrase of the passage, the author expressively mentions the pose of the martyrs:

Peristephanon VI 106-108. The torture did not dare to force their palms
that had to be lifted to the Father in the attitude of the cross;
it detaches the arms destined to God.²⁰⁴

If the paraphrase, ascribable to the second half of 4th century, cannot certainly be assumed to decipher the meaning of the original text, it seems anyway possible to wonder whether Prudentius’ reading emphasized an interpretation of the *Passio* already circulating in communities²⁰⁵. If so, the interpretative proposal so far formulated would be strongly supported.

Summarizing what has been so far exposed, it is possible say that the characterization of the victims in *Passio Fructuosi* is principally centred on the pose assumed by them in the flames, which would reproduce:

- the same attitude of Ananias, Azarias and Misael;
- the cruciform image assumed by orants in the moment of the prayer.

The “visual portrait” of victims presented to the audience of the text is the element that allows the activation of two exegetical assonances:

- the connection with scriptural figures conveyed by the similarity of their pose;

in an opposite sense, the biblical situation is associated with the present of community through a typological technique.

²⁰² See for instance Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum*, ed. J. MOREAU, SC 39, p. 88; 10:2. *Imposuerant frontibus suis immortale signum* and p. 127; 44:5. *Commonitus est in quiete Constantinus ut caeleste signum Dei notaret in scutis.*

²⁰³ About the figure of the orant see *supra*, n. 71.

²⁰⁴ Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, ed. M. CUNNINGHAM, CCSL 126, p. 318; VI 106-108. *Non ausa est cohibere poena palmas / in morem crucis ad Patrem levandas, / solvit brachia quae Deum precentur.* About the text see also P.Y. FUX, *Prudence et les martyrs: Hymnes et tragédie. Peristephanon 1.3-4. 6-8. 10. Commentaire*, Fribourg 2013 (Paradosis. Études de littérature et de théologie ancienne 55), in part. pp. 153-192.

²⁰⁵ It seems significant that Prudentius connects the idea of the liberation of the arms from bends with the act of lifting them toward the sky.

- the perception of God’s presence and “embodiment” in the martyrs’ flesh, conveyed by the allusion to the symbol of the cross.

Such hermeneutical elaboration, suggested through a complex twine of analogies and symbols, reproduces the same theological outcomes developed in the context of iconographic documents, as far as both the contents and the meanings are concerned, and regarding the instruments used to delineate them: on one side, the principal thematic cores are represented also in this case by:

- 1) the “Quartodeciman continuity” between Jesus’ passion and martyrdom;
- 2) the “incorporation” of divine presence in the martyr, on the basis of the *tertium comparationis* represented by sacrifice²⁰⁶.

On the other, the principal instruments through which such meanings are produced are:

- 1) the typological connection with *Dn* “tales”;
- 2) the attribution to the martyrs of a pose that reminds of the cross.

Conclusively, both the allusion to the Hebrews, and the specific emphasis placed on the attitude of the martyrs – who are “described” as if the audience of the *Passio* could actually “see” them with outstretched arms in the flames – suggest to wonder whether the community which produced and liturgically received the text had in mind the widespread iconographic representations of the figurative theme of the young orant men in the furnace, which certainly must have been well-integrated in Christians’ memory by the time in which the *Passio* was composed²⁰⁷, at least in the

²⁰⁶ It must be added that in this case the *theologumenon* of the martyr as *alter Christus* is enriched by the reference to the joy of the persecuted one (*gaudens*), which can be interpreted pursuant to this peculiar condition, and not just as depending on the certainty about resurrection (*de resurrectione securus*). About the joy of martyrs see R. CACITTI, Τί ἐστὶ ὄτι ἐγέλασας; *Le motivazioni della gioia del martirio nel cristianesimo antico*, in C. MAZZUCCO (cur.), *Riso e comicità nel cristianesimo antico. Atti del convegno di Torino 14-16 Febbraio 2005 e altri studi*, Alessandria 2007, pp. 569-592. The theme returns also in *Martyrium Polycarpi* 12:1, with the same possible implications.

²⁰⁷ It is useful to cite here a significant case apparently supporting the hypothesis that iconography played a central role in the literary reception of *Dn* “tales”, at least in martyrial literature. In *Martyrium Cononii* – a document containing “the...story of a courageous Greek from Nazareth named Conon”, likely set in Phrygia or Pisidia in a place called Carmena (see H. MUSURILLO [ed.] 1972, pp. xxxii-xxxiii) and ascribed to the Decian period by *Roman Martyrology* but probably composed in the post-Costantinian period (*IBID.*, pp. xxxii-xxxiii) – the “impious tyrant” pronounces the following statement: *Martyrium Cononi*, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, pp. 190-191; 5:5. “You may not obey me, but the tortures will teach you how to obey. And if you despise the tortures, I will kill you throwing you to a most fierce lion, or I will give you as food to the beasts of the sea, or I will have you put to death by hanging on a cross, or I will throw you into a cauldron heated by a blazing fire and so melt away your flesh, unless you sacrifice to the invincible and eternal gods” (5:5. Ἔμοι οὐ πείθῃ, αἱ βάσανοί σε πτοήσασθαι πείσουσιν· εἰ δὲ καὶ τῶν βασάνων καταφρονεῖς, λέοντί σε πικροτάτῳ

light of their universally admitted diffusion since the beginning of the 3rd century in a defined and structured scheme.

2.3.3. Between “martyrdom” and “Spirit”: *Passio Montani et Lucii*

The use of *Dn* “tales” in *Passio Fructuosi* shares many common elements with the reference to the three Hebrews that can be found in the probably coeval²⁰⁸ *Passio Montani et Lucii*²⁰⁹. In spite of the different geographical contexts – if *Passio Fructuosi* can be ascribed to Hispanic area, *Passio Montani* is an African document²¹⁰ –, the use of the biblical material seems to express a unitary tradition.

παραβαλὼν οὕτως σε ἀναλώσω, ἢ βορὰν τοῖς ἐκ βυθοῦ θηρίοις παραδώσω σε, ἢ ἐπὶ σταυροῦ κρεμάσας ἀποκτανθῆναι σε ποιήσω, ἢ λαβροτάτῳ πυρὶ ἐν λέβητι ὑποκαιομένῳ βαλῶ σε καὶ ἐκτίξω τὰς σάρκας σου, ἐὰν μὴ θύσῃς τοῖς ἀητήτοις καὶ ἀιωνίοις θεοῖς.). Though the text cannot be ascribed to the same chronological period on which the present research lingers, the list of possible tortures cited by the emperor requires to be at least considered, not just because the references to lions and fire represent a possible, vague allusion to *Dn* “tales” (respectively chapters 6 and 3), but also because of the allusion to the *expositio* to the “beasts of the sea”, that may recall the episode of Jonah swallowed by the sea monster jaws. It is reasonable to wonder whether a possible justification for the combining of such citations should be researched in iconography, where the themes of Daniel in lions’ den, Jonah swallowed by the *ketos* and the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace are among the most widespread and used types. In other words, it is not too ventured to hypothesize that the author of the passage extrapolated these biblical references among the most frequent “images” of martyrdom that populated the background of his community. If in the case of *Dn* “tales” the martyrial connotation is immediate, the reference to Jonah may presuppose a more articulated reflection: the scene may have been chosen in quality of symbol of Christ’s passion, a theme which is already developed by the allusion to the death by crucifixion. Accepting this interpretation, it would be possible to suggest that in this case the author elaborated his text applying the same method with which iconography elaborates its own documents, namely associating scenes and images whose meanings require to be deciphered through a seamless reading of the whole sequence. Evoking Daniel in lions’ den, Jonah in the sea monster jaws, the cross and the Hebrews, the emperor of *Martyrium Cononi* seems to unconsciously pronounce a sort of “theological sequence” of figures that creates a real “theological manifest”, in which martyrdom, through the use of typology, is exegetically connected with the death of Christ. About the text, in addition to the bibliography compiled by H. MUSURILLO (ed.) 1972, p. lxvi n. 28, see also C.R. MOSS 2010, p. 183.

²⁰⁸ See H. MUSURILLO (ed.) 1972, pp. xxxv-xxxvi: “The *martyrdom* purports to be another account of the execution of clergy, this time from Carthage, under the second edict of Valerian. The date would in all likelihood be in the spring of the year 259, either 24 Feb., with the Roman martyrology, or 23 May, following the *kalendarium Carthaginiense*”. The scholar identifies two sections in the *Passio*: “the first (1-11) is a letter addressed by the martyrs to the community at Carthage, while they were languishing in prison towards the end of the year 258... The second part (12-13), relating the martyrs’ deaths, comes from the hand of a disciple of Flavian ... the leader of the group, and was perhaps the author of the martyrs’ letter”. See also M.A. TILLEY, *The Bible in Christian North Africa: the Donatist World*, Minneapolis 1997, p. 46, who also specifies how “here one finds a community that was willing to admit that it was rent by internal quarrels. It was these divisions that were the diabolical foe over which the confessors had to triumph. In this *Passio*, Roman persecutors were not the enemy... The real foe...was the internal squabbling that beset the community”. Concerning the possible author of the text see *IBID.*, p. 46. For references about manuscript tradition, editions and philological considerations see in part. F. DOLBEAU, *La Passion des saints Lucius et Montanus. Histoire et édition du texte*, “Revue des Études Augustiniennes” 29 (1983), pp. 39-82.

²⁰⁹ For a short reference to the citation of *Dn* in the *Passio* see M.A. TILLEY 1997, pp. 46-47.

²¹⁰ See M.A. TILLEY 1997, p. 46: “Again from Carthage during the persecution under Valerian is the *Passio Sanctorum Montani et Lucii*”. The scholar cites the case of Montanus and his companions with the objective to identify the “the roots of Donatist hermeneutics in the exegetical practices” (p. 41) and further underlines the

Passio Montani et Lucii 3.1. Then imprisoned and conducted under the authority of the local magistrates, we heard the soldiers announce the sentence: the day before we had been threatened to be exposed to fire. Indeed, as we later could ascertain, he intended to burn us alive. **2.** But the Lord, who is the only one who can rescue his servants from fire, who keeps the words and the heart of the king in his hand²¹¹, he averted from us the cruelty of governor. **3.** And devoting ourselves to constant prayer with all our faith, immediately we obtained what we had asked for: as soon as the fire had been lit to destroy our bodies, it extinguished and the flames of the overheated ovens was lulled by the divine dew. **4.** And it was not difficult for those of faith to believe that modern examples could equal old ones, since Lord promised through the Spirit, for he, who operated such glory in favor of the three youths, was also victorious in us²¹².

surviving of quotation extracted from *Dn* in Donatist production ascribable “to the end of the third quarter of the fourth century”, when the most cited biblical sections were “the stories of Eleazar and the Maccabee brothers (2*Macc* 6-7) and of Daniel’s three young companions (*Dn* 3)” (p. 153). According to M.A. TILLEY 1997, p. 64, among the earliest African *Passiones* a reprise of *Dn* “tales” would return in *Passio Maximae, Donatillae et Secundae* 1 (see *Analecta Bollandiana* 9 [1890], pp. 110-116 in part. pp. 110-111 and M.A. TILLEY, *Donatist Martyrs Stories: the Church in Conflict in Roman North Africa*, Liverpool 1996, pp. 13-24), a text that “records events that occurred in 304” (M.A. TILLEY 1996, pp. 13-14 and ID. 1997, p. 59), when “the Catholics who sacrificed to the genius of the emperor were likened to those who worshiped the statue of Nebuchadnezzar”. The reading of the passage does not allow to identify a specific textual reference, but the general context can actually be considered as a parallel to that one presented in *Dn* 3:1-7 and signally *Dn* 3:7 (M.A. TILLEY 1996, p. 18, presents the translation of the text: 1. “Anulinus the proconsul said: «Maximian and Gallienus the godfearing and august emperors, deigned to deliver letters to me that all Christians should come and sacrifice; however any who would refuse and would not obey their commands should be punished with various torments and tortures». Than they all feared greatly for themselves and their spouses, and even the young men and women were afraid. Among them were even presbyters and deacons with all ranks of the clergy. Throwing themselves on the ground they all worshipped the cursed idols”. For the Latin text see *Analecta Bollandiana* 9 [1890], pp. 110-111, 1. *Anolinus proconsul dixit: “Maximianus et Gallienus, pii et augusti imperatores, litteras ad me dare dignati sunt ut christiani omnes veniant et sacrificent; qui autem noluerint et eorum praecepta non audierint, diversis tormentis et cruciatibus puniatur. Tunc timuerunt valde universi sibi et uxoribus suis, et etiam iuvenes et virgines; inter quos etiam fuerunt presbyteri et diacones cum universo clero. Qui omnes prostrati adoraverunt execrabilia idola.*)

²¹¹ *Prov* 21:1.

²¹² *Passio Montani et Lucii*, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, pp. 214-217; 3:1. *Igitur apprehensis nobis et apud regionantes in custodia constitutis, sententiam praesidis milites nuntiare audivimus, quod heri corpus nostrum minaretur urere. Nam, ut postea quoque verissime cognovimus, exurere nos vivos cogitavit. 2. Sed dominus, qui solus de incendio servos suos potest liberare, in cuius manu sermones et corda sunt regis, furentem a nobis saevitiam praesidis avertit. 3. Et incumbentes praecibus assiduis tota fide statim quod petivimus accepimus: accensus paene in exitium nostrae carnis ignis extinctus est et flamma caminorum ardentium dominico rore sopita est. 4. Nec difficile credentibus fuit nova posse ad vetera exempla pertingere, domino per spiritum pollicente, quia qui gloriam istam operatus est in tribus pueris, vincebat et in nobis.* For bibliographical references, apart from the list compiled by H. MUSURILLO (ed.) p. lxxvii n. 34, see F. DOLBEAU 1983, pp. 39-65.

In both *Passio Fructuosi* and *Passio Montani*:

- Daniel's companions are cited in the context of the description of the exposition of the martyrs to fire, with a further allusion to prayer (also in this case the modalities of the martyrdom represent the "frame-motifs" that activate and justify the reference to the episodes included in First Testament);
- the biblical allusions offer a typological explanation of the Christian experience, conceived in fully continuity with the episode narrated in Scripture.

Concerning the second point, it is possible to underline two sensible discrepancies compared with *Passio Fructuosi*.

A first difference concerns the instruments through which the documents build and elaborate the typological link. In the case of Fructuosus' narration, as already outlined, the connection is suggested through a "visual" overlapping between the "image" of the Hebrews in the furnace and that one of the martyrs in the flames. The richness of details concerning the pose and the physical attitude of the characters produces a sort of "snap-shot" of the furnace episode, in a way that allows to hypothesize the intention – conscious or unconscious – to arouse within the listeners the memory of the iconographic scene.

Passio Montani does not exploit such "visual" resource, developing the typological association in the context of a theological speculation concerning the salvation of the victims of persecution. The biblical episode is recalled in two steps:

- first of all, it is indirectly and implicitly introduced by the reference to the "flames of the overheated ovens" extinguished by "the divine dew", an expression that clearly echoes the "wind bringing dew" generated by God's angel to save Ananias, Azarias and Misael²¹³;
- secondly, at the conclusion of the paragraph, the direct and explicit citation of the Hebrews is finally revealed and enriched with a further allusion to the continuity between the action of the Lord in both Testaments.

Another difference concerns the same function of the typological reference. In the case of Fructuosus the overlapping between Daniel's companions and the martyrs represents a sort of "bridge" that allows to transfer the prerogatives of the first directly to the latter; among such

²¹³ *Dn* 3:50.

prerogatives, the principal one seems to be represented by the salvific action of the Trinity pursued through the “incorporation process”.

In the case of *Passio Montani* the direction and the real objective of the typological exegesis is revealed at the end of the passage, where the explicit mention of Daniel’s companions finally recurs: the continuity between their experience and the martyrs’ one testifies that “modern examples could equal old ones, since Lord promised through the Spirit, because the one who operated such glory in favor of the three youths, was also victorious in us”²¹⁴. In other words, even though the quotation of the Hebrews’ model is certainly adopted to qualify the experience of Montanus’ companions²¹⁵, the real goal of the author has to be researched in the intention to assume a position concerning the role of the Spirit and its persistence during the period in which the *Passio* was composed, in a way that allows an equation between ancient and modern *exempla*²¹⁶.

In spite of this, a subtle detail may reveal an involuntary trace of a reprise of the tradition concerning the “incorporation” of the divine in the victims, once again mediated by the mention of Daniel’s companions: the action of the same Lord *qui gloriam istam operatus est in tribus pueris*, is described as a victory (*vincebat*) obtained *et in nobis*. If, in general, the passage explains how the typological continuity between a “tale” exposed in First Testament and the historical persecutions generates the triumph of the Christian martyrs²¹⁷, it must be more specifically highlighted that such victory is not directly attributed to the latter, but rather to God, that is present *in* them²¹⁸. The preposition *in* may assume in this case the same role performed by the verb *compleo* in *Passio Fructuosi*

²¹⁴ *Passio Montani et Lucii*, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, pp. 214-239; 3:4. *Nec difficile credentibus fuit nova posse ad vetera exempla pertingere, domino per spiritum pollicente, quia qui gloriam istam operatus est in tribus pueris, vincebat et in nobis.*

²¹⁵ The problem of the role of the citations in the *Passio* is outlined by M. TILLEY 1997, pp. 46-47. The scholar affirms that “Bible based endorsement of the martyrs allowed them to speak words of encouragement to the community. The messages of the *Passio Montani et Lucii* were promises of a return to their heavenly home and a treasure that would not fail, encouragement to persevere, and emphasis on the value of unity couched in the words of Jesus... The use of quotations and allusions reflects only secondarily a concern with the role of persecution. The identity of approved martyrs is important but only instrumentally. The majority of biblical texts, especially those positioned strategically from a literary point of view, focus the attention of the audience on the value of endurance to the end”. The reference to the three Hebrews’ episode analysed in the present chapter suggests to add another function to those underlined by the scholar, that is the reinforcement and the support of a specific theological option.

²¹⁶ The statement clearly reminds of the *incipit* of *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, ed. H. MUSURILLO 1972, pp. 106-; 1:1. *Si vetera fidei exempla et Dei gratiam testificantia et aedificationem hominis operantia propterea in litteris sunt digesta ut lectione eorum quasi repraesentatione rerum et Deus honoretur et homo confortetur, cur non et nova documenta aequae utriusque causae convenientia et digerantur?* The whole *Passio Montani* maintains a peculiar relation with *Passio Perpetuae*, according to H. MUSURILLO (ed.) 1972, pp. xxxv-xxxvi: in the first section of the text some visions “recall the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas; others, like Montanus’ quarrel with Julian (11:1-5), are unique”. Moreover, “the anonymous writer ... clearly a disciple of Cyprian, attempts to create a *Passio* that will rival the story of Perpetua and Felicitas; for this reason, if for no other, the degree of historicity will always remain difficult to determine.” About the link between *Passio Perpetuae* and *Passio Montani* see also M. TILLEY 1997, pp. 46-47.

²¹⁷ The same concept of martyrdom as triumph has been discussed *supra*, pp. 82-83.

²¹⁸ It must be noticed that in this case there is no further reference that allows to specifically hypothesize an allusion to Christ.

and may presuppose the adhesion to a conception of martyrdom that implicitly stresses the idea of *incorporatio*²¹⁹.

²¹⁹ It is possible to cite here as a parallel case the already mentioned words of Felicita in *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, *supra*, n. 73.

2.4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of iconographic and literary sources reveals the existence, among the different trajectories of *Dn* “tales” reception, of a rooted tradition that associates the biblical stories to Christ’s passion, in a way that seems to presuppose and express a “Quartodeciman conception”.

In both documentary categories, the section of “tales” prevalently involved is chapter 3, with specific attention to the episode of the exposition of the three Hebrews to flames. If in iconography the reprise of this passage of the story immediately results from the use of the type of Daniel companions’ in the fiery furnace, in literature the panorama appears more vague and indefinite, especially because the “literal citations” of single passages derived from the episode coexist with the general assumption of narrative motifs that reprise the plot of the whole chapter without using the exact biblical words (the recurrent *topoi* are the refusal of idolatry, the punishment of fire – and the eventual mention of the beasts –; the allusion to the martyrs’ prayer in the moment of the death). As has been suggested, it is possible to hypothesize that such “structural continuity” between narrations of martyrdoms and biblical stories represents the element that activates and stimulates the further, more specific quotation of *Dn* passages (it seems significant that no references to *Dn* “tales” recur in contexts that do not contemplate those structural motifs). At the same time, it cannot be excluded that *Acta* and *Passiones*, characterized by a liturgical and theological vocation, have the tendency to stress, among different phases of the historical persecutions, the moments overlapping the biblical “tale”, as it also happens, for instance, with the reception of the fourth book of Maccabees.

Under the point of view of the exegetical technique, the association between Christian martyrs and First Testament protagonists is elaborated through the instrument of the typology, that interprets the former as an accomplishment, a fulfilment, an antitype of the latter.

In iconographic context, the allusion to “Quartodeciman *Pascha*” results from the association of *Dn* characters with the figure of Jonah thrown from the ship, one of the earliest representations of Jesus’ death. In some cases, the figurative source elaborates more specific reflections, adopting the symbols of the cross – such as the “orant” pose with outstretched arms or the tree of the ship – to convey the idea of the presence of the same Christ at the moment of the martyrdom, and signally in the same body of the martyr. In this way, the iconographic production preserves traces of speculations which do not just concern the Christian themes of *sequela* and *imitatio*, but also the more specific *theologumenon* of the “incorporation” of Jesus in the victim of the persecution.

If such developments know a widespread and capillary diffusion in iconography, and mainly in sarcophagi production, this use of *Dn* themes is barely attested in literature, where the reflection about “Quartodeciman martyrdom” does not preferably exploits those biblical materials; some significant parallel cases can be found in *Acta* and *Passiones* of preconstantinian martyrs, where the episode of the three Hebrews is cited to interpret and re-read the paleochristian historical persecutions in a theological sense.

The case of Polycarp remains paradigmatic and summarizes the most diffused methods of such elaboration, combining “literal”, “non-literal” and “narrative” reprises of the biblical text and mixing them with references to the sacrificial *Pascha* of Christ: in this way, a sort of “hermeneutic cycle” establishes both a typological link between the persecutions and the biblical episodes, and a further connection between martyrdom and ancient Easter.

Passio Fructuosi represents the most significant parallel to the “iconographic voice”: placing particular emphasis on the “cruciform” pose of the martyrs in the moment of their death, the document may both stimulate a direct, “visual” connection with the figurative type of the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace, and evoke, through the adoption of the symbolic “image” of the cross, the idea of the divine “embodiment” in the victims’ flesh.

If *Passio Montani et Lucii* resorts to the quotation of *Dn* in the context of an allusion to the role of the Spirit in *nova fidei exempla*, the reference to God’s victory in martyrs may betray the adhesion to a theological tradition in which the theme of “incorporation” played a certain role.

Also in literary tradition the allusion to Daniel’s companions contributes in supporting the reflection about the link between martyrdom and Christ’s passion, in a way that substantially reminds of iconographic outcomes.

In general terms, such parallelism between sources can be explained considering their own nature: both figurative documents and martyrial literature share a “liturgical” origin and function, being also a fundamental resource exploited by ancient catechesis to shape and mould paleochristian identity. Being simultaneously present in the heart of the cultural practices devoted to martyrs (iconographic production as privileged “scenery” of those liturgies and literature as “Scriptures” subjected to the attention of the audience), those documentary categories shared the same contextual matrixes and probably could easily express, for this reason, the same theological outcomes.

The strength and the role of “cult” in the elaboration of those themes exemplary emerges from the proximity of Lord’s Supper and *refrigerium*: the overlapping between the martyr and the same “Eucharistic bread”, alluded both in *Martyrium Polycarpi* and in the iconographic inclusion of Habbakuk in the scene of Daniel with lions, can be considered a possible evidence of this theme.

The “cultural/funerary” nature of that liturgical context may have boosted the peculiar sensibility of those documents toward a “Quartodeciman” conception of passion and martyrdom; at the same time, signally considering the case of *Fructuosus*, it does not seem inappropriate at least to wonder whether literature has been in some measure (consciously or unconsciously) influenced by iconography, receiving and adopting its more ancient and diffused exegesis of *Dn* “tales”.