CHAPTER 8

The Death of Peter: Anchoring an Image in the Context of Late Antique Representations of Martyrdom

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If you participate in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice; so that when his glory is revealed, you may also rejoice exultantly
1 Peter 4.13

Already in 1 Clement 5, Peter is characterized as a martyr, though his death on the cross is not mentioned here, but in the Acts of Peter.¹ This text, most probably written in the late second century (180−190),² describes the death and burial of the apostle Peter in detail (8.4–11.12): the beheading upside down is mentioned and explained following Peter's last speech to the people, then his death, with Marcellus taking care of the corpse and his inhumation in a large sarcophagus.³ In visual art, Peter's crucifixion is not depicted before the eighth century. It is the aim of this article to contextualize the depiction of Peter’s martyrdom within the visual culture of Late Antique depictions of martyrdom.⁴ With this goal in mind, it seems useful to start with a short overview of narrative representations of martyrs and their death in early Christian art and to discuss the question of why their death is depicted only rarely. Then we will consider the crucifixion of Christ as a model for all martyrdoms. This will give

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¹ On the letter of Clement, see Annewies van den Hoek’s contribution to this volume, Thacker’s for the Acts of Peter.
² All dates are CE. On the dating of the Acts of Peter, see Zwierlein (2010) 36–7. A slightly later dating (first quarter third century) is also possible, Eastman (2015) 2.
³ This remarkable detail considering Peter’s burial (in a sarcophagus) was kindly pointed out to me by Jutta Dresken-Weiland.
⁴ In this paper, “martyrdom” primarily refers to depictions of the moment of death, and only secondarily to scenes of passion, which imply the subsequent death without showing it explicitly.
us a better understanding of the key figure of this volume, the apostle Peter, in early Christian art and especially on sarcophagi.\(^5\)

The images of martyrdom are narrative images that show the cruel climax of a saint’s life—be it in one single scene or as part of a pictorial cycle. These innovative images on different narrative media helped to anchor the idea of heroic death in Christian identity.\(^6\) Besides non-narrative images that perfectly fitted traditional, non-Christian Roman art in form and content (e.g. orantes, fish, anchors, partly bucolic or maritime images),\(^7\) the subjects of early Christian imagery were widely based on biblical and apocryphal stories. Convincing and intelligible iconographic solutions had to be found to visualize them.\(^8\) Still, “innovative” does not always mean, “newly invented”. Rather, iconography that was deeply anchored in Roman visual culture had to be built on and reinterpreted.\(^9\) Therefore, Christian art gave new meaning to old images, one example being depictions of martyrdom that developed partly out of the iconography of executions. Important steps in this evolution from ‘victim to victor’, as Felicity Harley-McGowan called it, will be discussed in this paper.\(^10\)

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\(^5\) For a general overview on the iconography of Peter in early Christian art, see Dresken-Weiland’s contribution to this volume.

\(^6\) Following N. Mahne I understand a medium to be narrative as long as it stimulates a narrative scheme within the beholder: ‘Ein Medienprodukt kann als narrativ bezeichnet werden, wenn es das narrative Schema des Rezipienten zu aktivieren vermag’, Mahne (2007) 16.

\(^7\) According to R. M. Jensen, this traditionalism shows that early Christians shared common virtues with their pagan neighbours. It is of course the advantage of these pictures to leave a theological interpretation open. Nevertheless, when Jensen interprets ‘harvesting erotes’, a frequent bucolic motif in Roman Art, as ‘cherubs harvesting’ she overstrains the limits of interpretation a little. According to Revelation 4.6–11 cherubs are characterized by six wings, the erotes have only two, Jensen (2000) 12.

\(^8\) On the development of early Christian iconography in general, see Klauser (1961); Grabar (1968); Brandenburg (1978); Kemp (1994); Jensen (2000); Bisconti (2000); Bisconti (2002).

\(^9\) As Grabar (1968) xlvi put it: ‘the great majority of its (scil. Christian art’s) distinguished features were neither created nor invented by the makers of the first Christian images. Almost everything in their work was dictated by the models they followed.’ This view of a limited impact of Christianity on art has been criticized rightly: W. Kemp argues for an imagery with its own syntax and grammar, while using the traditional vocabulary. For the discussion of impact of Christianity on art, see Kemp (1994) 13–7.

\(^10\) Harley-McGowan (2015) or as Shaw (1996) 312 has put it: ‘in order to win, one had to lose’. Still foundational for the iconography of martyrdom remains Grabar (1946) 39–104.
1 Martyrdom as Victory

Except for some written evidence, we know only a few objects or monuments that show the death of a saint in early Christian art.11 Dealing with violent death in Roman society Catharine Edwards states: ‘It is notable how few visual representations of martyrdom survive by comparison with written sources. The consumption of such images was perhaps less susceptible to control by the church authorities, whose accompanying commentaries glossed the recitations of martyr acts to the faithful’.12 This explanation, of course not in the focus of Edwards study, does not seem convincing to me, as the relationship between so-called private and official early Christian art is hard to clarify.13 Therefore, I would try to push Edwards’ media-critical approach to this phenomenon into another direction. It is well known, that text and image follow different rules and offer different option to guide their recipient.14 Regarding representations of martyrdom Lucy Grig states a different intensity of the violence rendered in written or visual sources. The majority of the martyr’s literature draws a more drastic picture of the violent deaths.15 Avoiding images of martyrdom in art is not due to a general neglect of violence in Christian art but is specifically related to the context of martyrdom. Cruel scenes are not uncommon in early Christian art, as numerous depictions of the Hebrews in
the fiery furnace (both in catacomb paintings and on sarcophagi) or the killing of the Egyptian First-Born or the (unique) scene showing Samson slaughtering a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass in the Via Latina Catacomb shows. We will come back to this interplay of media further below; the following overview of the visual evidence highlights the potential and limits of a pictorial representation of martyrdom in contrast to a written one as delivered in martyr’s acts or passions. It contains all scenes of martyrdom from Rome dating from the fourth and early fifth century, where and when this subject is documented for the first time. This choice is not only reasonable due to the lack of examples from outside Rome, but it connects the chronology and content of pictorial representations of martyrdom to those of Peter’s passion as displayed on sarcophagi, discussed in the second part of this article.

The earliest surviving depiction of martyrdom derives from the Roman Catacomb of Domitilla. On the column shaft once decorating the tombs of two martyrs, Achilleus and Nereus (fig. 8.1), a relief shows the beheading of a man who is identified by the inscription as Achilleus. There must have been a similar relief on a second column shaft showing his fellow martyr Nereus. Comparing the style of the relief to early Christian sarcophagi, a dating into...

16 Andaloro (2006) 154‒57 (B. Mazzei).

17 I knowingly omit the scene of Stephen’s martyrdom that was once part of the cycle of frescoes on the southern wall of the nave of St Paul’s lost in the fire of 1823. Its dating has stirred academic discussion, but most scholars agree that it belongs to the first part of the fifth century, either made in the pontificate of Leo I (440‒461) as part of the restoration testified in LP. L239, see Andaloro (2006) 97 and 124 with bibliography) or around 400 (see Kessler (1989) 121‒23, with a bibliographical note 11 on the record of the lost frescoes by means of various watercolour copies and engravings from the 17th to the 19th centuries collected in Bib. Vat., Cod. Barb. Lat. 4406 and Cod. lat. 9843). The scene shows the kneeling proto-martyr, who is being lapidated by the people in his back, thus right before his death according to Acts 7.60. Stephen gazes towards the upper corner of the image field, where in a kind of mandorla Christ appears to offer his heavenly assistance. Again, the image closely follows Acts 7.55‒6: “But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’” Unfortunately, the restoration of the whole cycle in the 14th century hinders an analysis of the original iconography. As some frescoes clearly show a middle Byzantine influence, the medieval impact on the composition and iconographic scheme is hard to distinguish and has been judged differentially. See White (1956); Hetherington (1979) 98 f.; Elen (1985) 256‒258; Tronzo (2001) 470‒478; Romano (2002).

18 Of course, Christian art did not only develop in Rome or on the Italian peninsula. The very limited evidence from other parts of the Mediterranean region is only ‘an accident of history’, Jensen (2000) 20. These circumstances force me to refer mostly to evidence from the city of Rome.
Figure 8.1 Column shaft showing the martyrdom of Achilleus, marble, late 4th c. (?), Catacomb of Domitilla, Rome
the late fourth century has been proposed by Fabrizio Bisconti. Achilleus is depicted with a *tunica discincta*; he is bending his knees with his arms bound behind his back. Behind him, a soldier wearing a *tunica*, *paludamentum* and a *pileus pannonicus* lifts his arm to strike him down with his sword. In the background above, a laurel wreath on top of a cross indicates Achilleus’ victory over death.

The combination of victory and salvation seems a promising strategy to develop a convincing iconography of martyrdom in a mono-scenic image – generally “salvific compensation” was necessary to broaden the way for Christianity in “displacing polytheism”. This strategy can be observed in other early Christian representations of martyrdom, for example on two bronze *bullae* that were found in Roman catacombs and are lost today. Both are known only in modern reproductions (engravings and a lead cask). The first is called *Sucessa-vivas*-medallion because of its inscription. It most probably shows the martyrdom of Lawrence (fig. 8.2). On one side, the martyr’s death is depicted: the martyr, held by two torturers (*tortores*) is already on the gridiron that has been put in front of the judge (*iudex/quaeasitor*), who is seated on podium at the left side. Behind the saint, a figure appears that is hard to identify,

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19 Bisconti (2004) 180. The pair of columns probably belonged to the architectural frame of the martyrs’ tombs commissioned by Pope Damasus in the last quarter of the fourth century: Krautheimer et al. (1937) III 132; contrary to Pergola (1983) 211 f. who interprets the columns as remaining of a ciborium covering the altar of the semi-hypogean basilica; the criticism against the early dating of the church I have summed up briefly elsewhere, see Löx (2013) 209–211.

20 The bending of his knees was interpreted as a sign of Achilleus’ flight mentioned in the corresponding Dam. *Epigr.* 8, Bisconti (2004) 180. However, a comparable – admittedly not identical – posture appears in other scenes of decollation as on the column of Marcus Aurelius, see below. The bending of the knees seems to be a naturalistic detail as it is of course necessary that the convict lowers his head before he can be beheaded.

21 Elsner (2003) 88.

22 Musei Vaticani, Museo Sacro, Gabinetto dei medagli (lead cask, without Inv.?); Rossi (1869) 34–7; Castagnoli (1953); Folliere (1980–82) 69–70 (for probable iconographical forerunners in monumental art); Bisconti (1995) 252–253; Bisconti (1997) 552–3 with bibliography; Spier (2007) 78 f.; Grig (2004) 180; Visonà (2015) 3–9 (against the identification as a forgery proposed by Fabrizio Bisconti). Maffioli (1998) summarizes the circumstances considering the medallion’s discovery and introduces a more reliable engraving and co-findings of the medallion; Maffioli (1999). Due to its bad state of preservation, no photo of the lead cask has been published. I thank Nicola Denzey Lewis for sharing her private photo and for discussing this object with me.

23 Except for the medallion, this scene is known from only one other late antique object, on a fifth/sixth-century fragment of a vase, from Egypt, today in Berlin: Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Ident. Nr. 3574.
but is most often interpreted as his soul leaving his body. On the more reliable engraving of the medallion, the heavenly hand is coming out of a cloud (fig. 8.3). One can also identify a palm branch instead of a candle as the second engraving has it. The second one is probably based on the lead cask of the medallion and not on the original. The piece shows on its other side a person, most probably Lawrence, wearing a wreath and holding a palm branch. He approaches a shrine covered by a baldachin architecture that is carried by twisted columns. The architecture of the shrine precisely resembles the depiction on the ivory reliquary from Samagher that shows pilgrims at Peter's tomb. This comparison allows an interpretation of the depiction on the medallion as the shrine of Peter and underlines the object’s authenticity that had been doubted by Bisconti.

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24 Merkt (2016) 213–15 doubts whether an average Christian was aware of the body and soul dualism that is articulated in patristic literature. The Sucessa-vivas-medallion seems to hint at a naive understanding of this dualism at least.
25 Maffioli (1998) 193–203, esp. 202 f.
26 Venice, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Venezia, c. 450 (?), see Longhi (2006).
27 Bisconti (1995) 252–53. In a later publication F. Bisconti did not repeat his doubts, but he interprets the shrine as that of Lawrence at the ager Veranus, Bisconti and Mazzoleni (2005) 41. Most of Bisconti’s arguments had already been refused in short by Grig (2004) 180. Visonà (2015) 3–9 argues for the authenticity of the object and proposes a dating in the late fourth / early fifth century, which, however, must remain hypothetical. As the ivory reliquary of Samagher was only found in 1909, it cannot have served as a model
Another small bronze object (fig. 8.4) published by Giovanni Battista de Rossi and now lost shows, on the one side, the multiplication of the loaves and, on the other, a possible scene of martyrdom, or at least of salvation. Here a man – only his torso is depicted – is holding a branch (of victory?) in his right hand; he is rescued by an angel that gives him a helping hand.\(^2\) De Rossi interpreted this scene as a depiction of the martyrdom of Vitalis, who was buried alive. But doubts remain, as the inscription reads “ΕΙΒW” and the scene is located near water, indicated by a row of reeds below the angel. The two concentrical circles around the man’s torso could well be waves. If the scene shows a martyrdom at all (neither tortor, carnifex, nor iudex/quaesitor are present!) it might be that of an unknown saint who had been sentenced to be drowned. Still, the drowning must not imply punishment at all; in this case, the story would not refer to a martyr but simply to a person rescued by God. Martyrdom always goes along with salvation, but obviously, martyrdom is not the only way to salvation.

For another example that connects martyrdom and victory, we leave late fourth century Rome for a moment, to show that this connection was followed

\(^2\) Rossi (1872) esp. 10 f.
**Figure 8.4** Enkolpion (sketch, original lost) with multiplication of the leaves and a scene of martyrdom (?), bronze
later. An ivory pyx found at the church of St Paul’s (fig. 8.5), probably from the sixth century and of Egyptian origin, shows both trial and execution condensed in one scene, and, in a second scene, the adoration of a martyr.\footnote{29} The flanking camels identify him as Menas. According to legend, the animals indicated the place where his body should be buried. In an analysis that aims at showing how the martyr – despite being beheaded – was characterized positively, it is important to note the presence of an angel in this scene. The heavenly messenger appears above the kneeling Menas; like the Roman Victoria, he indicates the martyr’s victory over death. This moment of divine salvation was modelled on the popular iconography of the sacrifice of Isaac, in fact, the similarity to the scene from the Old Testament led Giovanni Battista de Rossi to a wrong interpretation of the scene on the pyx as sacrifice of Isaac.\footnote{30} Still in the sixth century, an image of beheading of an unarmoured person called for an explanation that the Acts of the martyrs could provide easily, as I will point out below. Primarily, we will focus on the iconography of beheadings in non-Christian and Christian contexts, to show that images of martyrdom stand for a meaningful recoding.

1.1 Images of Beheadings – from Downright Defeat to Glorious Death

Another early pictorial representation of martyrdom brings us back to the city of Rome. A first example comes from a very special example of private worship. The two registers of frescoes in the so-called confessio in the domus below

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\footnote{29} British Mus. Inv. No. 1879,1220.1; DACL (1907) 1,1 s. v. Actes des martyres 426 figs. 71–2 (H. Leclercq); Grabar (1946) 76–77.

\footnote{30} Grabar (1946) 77 with reference to de Rossi (1869) 36. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for pointing out to me the similarities of both scenes. In general on the sacrifice of Isaac on sarcophagi see Paneli (2001), esp. 140 f. for the parallels between the sacrifice of Isaac and the concept of martyrdom.
the church of Ss. Giovanni e Paolo at the *clivus Scauri* can be dated to the second half of the fourth century or to the beginning of the fifth century. The interpretation as “private chapel” is generally accepted in scholarship and relies on the imagery and the architectural setting of the small room that can be reached only by a staircase. The room’s main wall has a small niche assuming for the private worship of a relic of one of the martyrs depicted on the sidewalls. Amongst other depictions, there are two in the upper register that display one of the earliest depictions of martyrdom in Christian art. They show, on the left side, the capture and, on the right side, the decollation of three persons (fig. 8.6). In the Christian context of a private chapel, the scene showing the decollation can be interpreted as a scene of martyrdom. The upper part of the wall is destroyed, so only the kneeling three, blindfolded, with their arms bound behind their backs, can be fully seen. Two pairs of legs above them probably belong to their executioners. The iconography follows earlier, rare depictions of beheadings in Roman art as e.g. on the Column of Marcus Aurelius in Rome. Of course, context and meaning of the pictorial motif could not be more different. In the non-Christian context of the column Roman supremacy over the barbarians is visualized more dramatically than ever before in Roman

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31 Most scholars favour a late fourth-century dating of the frescoes, see Andaloro (2006) 110 (C. Ranucci). For B. Brenk an even earlier dating (340–380/90) seems possible, see Brenk (1995) 105 f., whereas Bisconti (1998) argues for an early fifth century dating. All proposed datings are based only on the style of the paintings.

32 The central niche is flanked by the depiction of two *togati*. The lower register of the main wall shows a male *orans*. He is flanked by two persons – probably the owner of the *domus* and his wife – in *proskynesis*. On the side walls, the adoration scene continues in the lower register: on the left two *matronae*, the one next to the main wall in a gesture of grief, are directed towards the central wall; on the right: a *chlamydatus* with scroll and a second male (?) person walk in direction of the central *orans*.

33 Brenk (1995); Brenk (2003) 98–105.

34 The discrepancy between three persons being killed and only one being worshipped in the central niche has not yet been explained satisfactorily. Brenk (1995) 99–100 summarizes the proposed identification and finally states: ‘Die crux unserer Malerei besteht darin, dass die Heiligen und Märtyrer nicht beschriftet sind wie das sonst der Fall ist. Der Hausbesitzer hielt es nicht für nötig, die Namen der Dargestellten zu verewigen, denn ihm waren sie bekannt.’

35 For the reliefs of the Column of Marcus Aurelius (scene 20 and especially scene 61), see most recently Beckmann (2011) 148 f. and Griebel (2013) 20. 258–61; 331–4. 338. B. Brenk sees a difference between the depiction in the ‘private-chapel’ and earlier depictions of beheading. He states that in earlier depictions the condemned is grabbed by the scruff of his neck whereas this is not the case in the frescoes on the *clivus Scauri*, Brenk (2003) 101. However, the mentioned reliefs of the Column of Marcus Aurelius clearly show that the supposedly Christian iconography has its origin in Roman imperial art.

36 Grabar (1968) 50.
imperial art. Cruel images were also a traditional part of the Roman triumph and thus a common representation of Roman power and authority.\textsuperscript{37} However, scenes of decollations or more generally of public punishment – except for arena spectacles where criminals, captives or slaves killed each other or were killed by wild animals – were not common in Roman art at all, whereas they were in political life part of the \textit{summum gaudium plebis} since the republican period.\textsuperscript{38} Besides the scene on the column of Marcus Aurelius, its forerunner, the Column of Trajan shows some images of beheadings. Scene 45 shows (most

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\textsuperscript{37} Zimmermann (2009) 14.  
\textsuperscript{38} Liv. 9,24. Tert. \textit{de spect.} 1 states the power of pleasures (\textit{uoluptatin uís}) offered by ancient spectacles, see Edwards (2007) 63–8. Still worth reading on Roman cruelty: Kiefer (1933) 66–105. Massacring opponents was still entertaining the masses in the fourth century CE and a reason to praise the Emperor: ... \textit{non solum prouincialibus uestrís in caede hostium dederunt salutem sed etiam in spectaculo uoluptatem}. (\textit{Paneg. Lat.} 8,17,1, on Constantine I). In general on punishment in Roman times: Bauman (1996); Cantarella (1991). For late-antique practice, see Krause (2009); Krause (2014) 248–271. On arena spectacles in Roman late antique art, see recently van den Hoek and Herrmann, Jr. (2013) 94–106; 405–34, focussing on ARS dating from ca. 350–430; Puk (2014) 189–202.
probably) Dacian and Roxolanian captives being tortured by Moesian women during the first Dacian war.\(^{39}\) In general, the representation of an outrageous act of violence needs a special motivation and has a peculiar meaning.\(^{40}\) In this case, it underlines the barbarian conventions of warfare. In the second scene it is fulfilled by Roman allies, not Roman soldiers themselves. Roman soldiers only present the heads of killed Dacians to Trajan (scene 72), the result of the execution and of the first Dacian war fittingly underlines Rome’s supremacy. Scene 140 shows again a beheading, but the circumstances could not be more different. At the end of the second Dacian war the Dacians decided to commit suicide or to behead each other. These rare examples of depictions of execution in Roman art, lead to the conclusion, that killing an unarmoured person is not a convenient option to demonstrate Roman *virtus*.\(^{41}\) For this reason, barbarians on so-called *Schlachtensarkophagen* bear their weapons, albeit they are always in the weaker and inferior position. In fact, swords, lances, and shields are spread all over these sarcophagi, be it in the hands of the winning Romans, the massacred barbarians or as *tropaia* stressing once more Roman victory. To underline Roman *virtus* the opponent should be characterized dangerous or at least armoured.\(^{42}\) Otherwise, it would be more suitable to show mercy and so express another Roman virtue, namely *clementia*.

On the one hand, the clearly inferior position of the convict prevents a positive characterization of the executioner as glorious Roman and explains why executions were not a popular motif in Roman art. On the other hand, the martyr had to be characterized positively despite his physical inferiority, as he was admired for his endurance of pain.\(^{43}\) In the scene of decollation depicted in the *domus* underneath the later church of Ss. Giovanni e Paolo, that is only fragmentarily preserved, this aspect of victory in the moment of death could have been presented in the lost upper part of the fresco. The space would be sufficient to add a sign of victory be it palm branches, wreaths, or a Victoria. Besides, the short cycle, consisting of the arrest, execution and the adoration of the martyr, and its architectural context left no doubt, that the condemned

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39 Koeppel (1991) 172 cat. No. 45.
40 Zimmermann (2009) 44.
41 This might explain why in scene 61, showing a beheading on the Column of Marcus Aurelius, it is not a Roman soldier, but a man in Germanic habit who kills the captive. The executioners could be future allies of the Romans as has been proposed by Müller (2009) 61 or he could be even a member of the same tribe as Hölscher (2000) 100 argued. This would underline the brutality of Roman punishment: executioner and executed would share one cruel fate.
42 Muth (2011) 333.
43 In *Acta Ss. Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 9 the martyr is admired by the jailer for her virtue, Edwards (2007) 210.
received a reward for their death, e.g. the one that appeared on the frescoes of the front wall; he is adored by the two flanking persons and the relics (of all three?) were most probably venerated. Once a way to express downright defeat in this context, a scene of beheading fitted now a worshipped person.

1.2 Suffering Victors: an Iconographical Obstacle

As mentioned above early Christian literature did not hesitate to describe torture and death in all their horrible details, it even got ahead of descriptions of violence in non-Christian literature.\(^{44}\) Fourth-century Christian writers, especially Eusebius, described forms of torture and killing unheard-of before.\(^{45}\) Had it been the Stoic ideal to endure pain without showing signs of suffering, the ideal promoted by the Christian martyr literature was to enjoy the suffering.\(^{46}\) The *passio Ss. Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, a very early (probably between 203 and 205)\(^{47}\) and thus highly influential text for martyr literature, for example underlines ‘the joy they (scil. the martyrs) would have in their suffering’; another example is Octavius who draws a picture of a laughing martyr and Pionius walking willingly and cheerfully to his execution.\(^{48}\) The texts underline in their last paragraph the martyr’s victory over death and thus remember the recipient that the martyrs now join Gods glory and that all the torture shows no effect on their body.\(^{49}\) In some accounts, the protagonists ‘maintain control over their own textual and interpretive destiny’ despite all violent hands laid on them.\(^{50}\) Pictorial images, especially mono-scenic ones were not able to control their message in such a clear direction. What is more, they had to

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\(^{44}\) ‘... it is particularly the logic of Christian martyrdom which demands an ever increasing amplification of the torments endured by the narrative's victim’. Edwards (2007) 212. ‘The greater the violence, the greater the possibility for victory: the more endurance, fortitude, immunity can be shown.’ Grig (2004) 66. A non-Christian author with comparable fascination for physical suffering is Seneca, see Edwards (1999).

\(^{45}\) Mendels (1999) 88–90.

\(^{46}\) Zimmermann (2013) 373. For the Stoic ideal, see Perkins (1995) 77–104; Edwards (2007) 147–160.

\(^{47}\) Recently on the *passio* and later (after 450?) *acta Perpetuae*: Kitzler (2015), 14–17 for the dating.

\(^{48}\) *Marytrium Pionii* 21. *Passio Ss. Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 17.1: *... contestantes passionis suae felicitatem ...*(translated by Perkins (1995) 107). Min. Felix, *Octavius* 37.1 *Quam pulchrum spectaculum deo, cum Christianus cum dolore congreditur, cum aduersum minas et supplicia et tormenta componitur, cum strepitum mortis et horrorem carnificis inrident inculcat ...* (How beautiful a spectacle for God, when a Christian confronts pain, when he is matched against threats, and punishments and torture, when laughing he tramples the noise of death and the horror of the executioner ..., translated by Edwards (2007) 218).

\(^{49}\) *Passio Ss. Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 11; *Martyrium Pionii* 22.

\(^{50}\) Castelli (2004) 103.
overcome an iconographical – also philosophical and theological\textsuperscript{51} – obstacle instead, namely to show a venerated person suffering, dying and triumphant at once. Christian scenes of martyrdom are anchored in an iconographic tradition, namely the mentioned depictions of executions in Roman imperial art. As on the column of Marcus Aurelius, the pose is comparable, but the context is very different from any scene of martyrdom.\textsuperscript{52} The executed person is always Rome’s enemy and in the inferior position of the loser. The picture intends to visualize Rome’s supremacy and the total inferiority of the enemy.\textsuperscript{53} Thus, a scene of martyrdom that followed the traditional iconographic scheme of an execution could have been irritating to a beholder who was used to seeing in the executed person Rome’s enemy and not the positively connoted protagonist of the scene. In written sources, suffering was promoted as a Christian virtue as early as the second century, as Judith Perkins has masterfully shown.\textsuperscript{54} In an image, it is much more difficult to characterize a tortured or executed person as a positive role model. Given the inferior position of the martyr, his final victory over death must be underlined by clear signs, like a palm branch or a wreath, as on the ivory pyx or on the small bronze objects discussed above. In the case of Achilleus on the relief from the Catacomb of Domitilla, it was necessary to add the wreath – that is, the martyr’s crown – above the scene of execution, in order to render Achilleus as victorious hero. The clear sign of victory transforms the suffering Achilleus into a winning loser. This combination helped to anchor the innovative image of the suffering Christian hero, the martyr, within the framework of Roman iconography. Different media underlined different aspects of their protagonists; in this case the martyrs’ death is only depicted in relief but not described in the epigram that goes along with it.\textsuperscript{55} It gives some rudimentary information on the lives of Achilleus and Nereus and underline their triumph in Christ. Epigram and relief complement one another and are connected in stressing the martyr’s victory. The different medial approach can be compared to the rendering of one of the most meaningful scenes in early Christian literature and art: the Crucifixion of Christ.

\textsuperscript{51} Already in 1958 J. Beckwith stated ‘for most pagans the passion of Christ was beyond their understanding’, Beckwith 1958, 3. As the passion of Christ is nothing less than the protomartyrium per se (see below), the salvation of all future martyrs, i.e. the mystery of their victorious death, was equally incomprehensible for early Christians.

\textsuperscript{52} See Harley-McGowan (2015) 143–47.

\textsuperscript{53} Grabar (1968) 50. On the development of a Christian iconography of suffering, see Harley-McGowan (2015) 138–51.

\textsuperscript{54} Perkins (1995). See also Edwards (2007) 207–20.

\textsuperscript{55} Dam. \textit{Epigr.} 8.
1.3 The Crucifixion of Christ and the Development of an Early Christian Iconography of Martyrdom

The depictions of martyrdom discussed above cannot be dated with certainty, but most of them are dated roughly from 350–440. Following others I would like to argue that it is not coincidental that we find the first pictures of the crucified Christ in monumental art at the beginning of the fifth century, namely on the wooden door reliefs at the church of S. Sabina on the Aventine Hill.\footnote{The connection between depiction of the Crucifixion and scenes of martyrdom has been seen for example by Pace (1993) 356–359. Already Van den Hoek and Herrmann Jr. (2013) 101 proposed: ‘Representations of martyrdom at the stake may, in fact, have been as unwelcome to Christian viewers as depictions of the crucifixion were.’}

Dating from the same period (c. 420/430) and likewise of Roman craftsmanship, the so-called Maskell Ivories, four panels (7.5 × 9.8 cm) today in the British Museum, show the redeemer upon the cross.\footnote{London, BM, Inv. No. MME 1856.06–23.4–7. See recently Foletti (2017) esp. 139 for the dating and the Roman origin of the ivory casket; add to his bibliography (140 n. 7) Harley-McGowan (2011a). On both monuments, see Harley (2006) 228–230. General on the doors of S. Sabina, see Jeremias (1980) passim (for the crucifixion 60–3, for the dating 105–7); Kemp (1994) 223–262; Foletti and Gianandrea (2016) 11–32 (for an overview of research on the doors).}

In Christ’s face you see no pain, while at least on the panel of the ivory casket a dent and a furrow indicate blood and water coming out of his pierced side. The contrast with the dead body of Judas next to Mary and John emphasises that the redeemer is alive and without pain. Both depictions clearly differ from each other, but in both Christ bears almost no signs of suffering and is still alive, and therefore victorious.\footnote{‘The peculiar intensity with which early artists insisted on Christ’s unbending body and glaring eyes indicates their desire to depict Christ unaffected by his Crucifixion.’ Kartsonis (1986) 33. For the iconographical differences, see Jeremias (1980) 62. Still in the sixth-century, elements of pain are missing in the so-called Rabbula Codex (Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Cod. Plut. I 56, fol 13r., dated 586), which testifies to an independent development of the crucifixion in the Byzantine iconography. In contrast to the western evidence Christ is wearing the purple kolobion of an early Byzantine emperor and is distinguished with a golden nimbus, see Deckers (2005) 54.}

Despite its relevance in Christian faith and in the biblical story, the passion of Christ and especially his crucifixion, as the proto-martyrdom, is a topic rarely depicted in art before the sixth century.\footnote{History of Art has dealt with this phenomenon repeatedly and offered different explanations for it; they have been summarized concisely by Jensen (2000) 133–137. A tempting one has been put forward by Martin (1955) and Grillmeier (1956). Both see the for a long time unsolved dispute about Christ’s two natures as a possible explanation for the late introduction of an imagery of the redeemer upon the cross. This idea has been enhanced by Kartsonis (1986) 38: ‘If this is correct, then the image of Christ alive on the cross may be successfully interpreted as a response to the difficulty of buttressing visually the doctrine of two natures.’}

This makes it comparable to...
the representations of martyrdom: In both cases, the exposure to pain (either stressing the suffering on or the enduring of pain) and the violent death are a relevant theme in literature but are avoided in pictorial representations. In early Christian times, the worldly life of Christ might have been more important to express his redemptive work than later on, as argued by Eduard Syndicus; however, this does not explain, why on sarcophagi that show scenes of Christ’s passion, the crucifixion itself was not depicted. The small group of so-called passion sarcophagi was in fashion from ca. 340–400 and shows Christ’s arrest, Christ before Pilate, Christ receiving the crown of thorns (in fact transformed into a coronation scene, as it shows no signs of suffering!) and Christ carrying the cross; his death itself was not depicted. Instead, the empty cross appears, often flanked by two sleeping guards as on a tree sarcophagus in the Vatican.

The chosen iconographic solution dealt successfully with this dilemma, for it created no doctrinal conflicts: if taken literally, the moment represented in these early Crucifixions preceded the Death of Christ, thus enabling the artist to avoid direct confrontation with the complexity of its death, whose theological definition was still incomplete. Moreover, an allegorical interpretation was equally satisfying from an Orthodox viewpoint. It succeeded in recalling the Passion of the human nature of Christ on the cross while confirming that throughout its duration Christ’s divinity remained “awake”. See also Jensen (2000) 151‒54. General on representations of the crucifixion in late antique and byzantine art: Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst 5 (1995) col. 284–356, s. v. Kreuzigung Christi (M. Mrass); Jensen (2000) 130–55; Harley (2006); Jensen (2007). For a short summary, see Deckers (2005) 50–62. The sixth-century evidence comes not so much from Rome, where we find it in S. Maria Antiqua (front wall of the apse, 705–7), but from Syria. The iconography found its way to the west on numerous pilgrim flasks and other souvenirs, Jensen (2000) 131; Chorikios Laudatio Marciani 1 (= or. I 75) mentions a painted cycle including the crucifixion in the Church dedicated to S. Sergios in Gaza. It is the earliest evidence for an image of the crucifixion in the eastern Mediterranean. Representations of the dead redeemer upon the cross appear regularly only from the tenth century onwards, Jensen (2000) 135.

60 The passion of Christ is for example relevant in Origen, Melito of Sardis or Tertullian, Jensen (2000) 136.
61 Syndicus (1962) 103.
62 Deckers (2005) 51.
63 Jensen (2017) 68–73. Recently J. Dresken-Weiland interpreted a piece of a frieze sarcophagus (Mus. Vat. Inv. 31530) as a unique depiction of the Crucifixion, Dresken-Weiland (2013) esp. 140–142. Still, doubts remain, as the figure of the redeemer on the cross itself is missing, and the remaining parts of the garment of Christ (?) cannot easily be reconstructed as part of his loincloth (subligaculum). General on dating, composition, and style of the passion sarcophagi Gerke (1939); Saggiorato (1969).
64 Rep. I 61.
The cross is combined with the crown of victory, transforming the sign of suffering into a symbol of triumph (*crux invicta*).\(^{65}\)

Before these examples from Rome, there is only evidence from *gemmae* that were commissioned much more often on demand than standardized sarcophagi. They were most probably produced in workshops in the East. A bloodstone from the late second or early third century shows a crucified Jesus with spread legs, even naked (fig. 8.7).\(^{66}\) As a magical object it was only visible to a very restricted range of people, foremost its owner himself. Its limited iconographic outreach may be one reason why this "experimentation"\(^{67}\) was not able to establish an iconographic tradition of the crucified redeemer.

Jeffrey Spier has proposed a mid-fourth century dating for another gem. The so-called Constanza Carnelian (fig. 8.8) shows a gathering of the apostles flanking a central cross with a nude figure of Christ.\(^{68}\) In analogy to this, the later images of the crucified Son of God from the first third of the fifth century remained an unfol owed innovation in early Christian art. Later images of Christ upon the cross, as they appear more frequently from the sixth century onwards, do not follow them.\(^{69}\) This trend to experimentation with new iconographic solutions can be detected in the images of martyrdom as discussed above. Like the Crucifixion, they do not establish an iconography of martyrdom already in the fifth century but remain exceptions. The Christians of the

\(^{65}\) Simultaneously the crucifixion as form of capital punishment runs out of use in course of the fourth century, see Krause (2009) 327. Various authors labelled the cross a Christian *tropaion* amongst them Iust. Mart. *apol*. 1 55; Tert. *apol*. 16.1 and *adv. Marcionem* 4.20; Eus. *vita Const*. 18.8 and Aug. * civ*. 18.32, see Harley-McGowan (2015) 137 f. On the cross as a symbol of victory in Christian art, see Dinkler (1967) and Jensen (2000) 148‒50. On the cross as Christian symbol in general, see Viladesau (2006) 42 f. and fundamentally Jensen (2017).

\(^{66}\) London, BM, Inv. No. PE 1986,0501.1. Michel et al. (2001) No. 457 (with bibliography); Spier (2007) No. 444; Harley-McGowan (2008) 217 f. J. Sanzo recently published an early-seventh-century Coptic manuscript (Brit. Lib. Or. 6796), in which the motif of the spread legs reappears, Sanzo (2016) fig. 2. The gem was considered to be a forgery among others by Dinkler (1967) 75 f. and Maser (1976) 272 f., who was followed by RAC 11 (1981) 293 f. s. v. Glyptik (J. Engemann). Engemann has recently revoked his doubts on the authenticity of the gems as the representation of the crucifixion shows a detail that could not have been known to modern forgers, Engemann (2011) 208 and 211. The arms of Christ are bound, not nailed to the horizontal beam: this has been proven to be a late antique practice by archaeological evidence. See Dresken-Weiland (2010b) 34. Jensen (2017) 78 remains sceptical on the third-century dating.

\(^{67}\) Harley-McGowan (2011b) 219.

\(^{68}\) J. Spier bases his dating upon the form of the letters and the carving style, Spier (2007) No. 444. The stone has been studied recently by F. Harley-McGowan, who is convinced of its authenticity. Harley-McGowan (2011b).

\(^{69}\) Jeremias (1980) 62 f. The sixth-century evidence relies mostly on objects related to pilgrimage to sites in the Holy Land as *ampullae* or reliquaries. See Jensen (2017) 86–9.
first four centuries after Christ’s death ‘could use words to describe the passion’ but ‘may have considered a visual presentation of Christ’s suffering too disturbing or too powerful once given concrete form’. What Robin M. Jensen concludes for avoiding images of Christ’s death seems a tempting explanation for the lack of images of dying martyrs. However, was this equally valid for images of Peter’s death to which we now turn?

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70 Jensen (2000) 153 f.
In the first part of the fourth century, Peter’s iconography is not yet fixed, but the apostle can be identified by context. From the mid-fourth century onwards, he also is identifiable by his short beard and hair style. It is not a surprise that Peter appears often both in monumental art and in the minor arts (for example, on the bottom of gold glasses): his tomb was venerated in Rome from at least ca. 160 onwards and its cult had its heyday after the building of the Constantinian basilica, he had a prominent role within the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Acts of Peter, and he was seen as vicarius Christi for the church and the city of Rome.

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71 General on the iconography of Peter: Dinkler (1938/39) 5–80; Sotomayor (1962); De Bruyne (1969) Bisconti (2001); RAC 27 (2016) 427–55 s. v. Petrus III (Ikonographie u. Kult) (E. Dassmann); for a bibliography, see also Koch (2000) 182 and Dresken-Weiland (2010a) 128–30.

72 The great majority of gold glasses have been found in Rome. Others have been exported, especially to the Rhine provinces, where in Cologne a small local production could be
Non-narrative representations outnumber the narrative scenes from the life of Peter that will be our focus. The images of Peter are not as frequent in catacomb paintings as on sarcophagi where we find many narrative representations of him: the water miracle, Peter and the cock, the apostle's arrest, and, more rarely, Peter and the dog of Simon Magus, Peter with Ananias and Sapphira, the raising of Tabitha, Peter reading, and finally (only once), the liberation of Peter from prison.

The following overview can be short as two other contributors of this volume, Jutta Dresken-Weiland and Roald Dijkstra, both have dealt extensively with this topic, Dresken-Weiland (2010a) 119–61. Dresken-Weiland (2011) passim; Dijkstra (2016) 310–24. See also Dresken-Weiland's contribution to this volume. On chronology and for an interpretation of scenes of the passion of Peter and Paul (not together with Christological scenes) on passion sarcophagi, Gerke (1939) 209–215; Saggiorato (1968) 99–131.

73 Dresken-Weiland (2010a) 21.
74 Dresken-Weiland (2010a) 119−61. Dresken-Weiland (2011) passim; Dijkstra (2016) 310−24.
75 Rep. I 6, 11, 14, 15, 17, 20, 22, 39−45, 52, 67, 73, 85, 86, 97, 100, 135, 153, 221, 241, 253, 255, 332 (Moses?), 369, 372, 417 (Moses?), 421, 422, 425, 431 (Moses?), 442?, 526, 533 (Moses?), 541−3 (Moses?), 552?, 621, 624?, 625, 636, 638, 651, 665, 673, 674, 677, 680 (allegorical lambs), 748, 768 (Moses?), 770−2, 807, 867, 919 (in combination with Peter's arrest), 932, 934, 935 (Moses?), 946, 951, 990, 991, 1007, Rep. II 11, 12, 30, 32, 51, 54, 58, 62, 65, 98 (in combination with Peter's arrest), 101, 203, 204, 250; Rep. III 32−4, 36−40, 49, 53, 60, 121?, 146, 172, 218 (in combination with Peter's arrest), 221, 225, 305, 352, 359, 388, 453, 460, 479?, 493, 511 (in combination with Peter's arrest), 581, 594, 609. Not in all cases, as indicated by a question mark, decision can be made whether the water miracle is conducted by Moses or by Peter. On the one hand the military dress of the drinking figures is a clear indicator for Peter, on the other there exist representations of Peter, identified by an inscription, that do not contain drinking figures at all, e.g. on a gold glass in the Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Matt et al. (1969) fig. 51.
76 Together with Christ: Lange (1996) 104−106; Rep. II 12, 108, 124, 139; Rep. III 34, 36, 37, 38, 52, 55, 58−62, 83, 86, 118, 125, 153, 155, 203, 222, 273, 277, 297, 354, 365, 399, 413, 427, 497−9, 511, 523; Rep. IV 46. Only Peter and a cock: Rep. II 124; Rep. III 71, 365, 427, 498 (lid), 597.
77 Rep. I 6, 7, 11, 14, 15, 17, 22, 39, 40, 42, 44, 57?, 61, 64, 215, 220, 221, 241, 369, 398, 434 (?), 507, 621, 625, 636, 674, 680, 694, 770, 771, 772, 910, 915, 932, 1007; Rep. II 11, 12, 19?, 21, 30, 58, 65, 96, 100, 120 (Martyrium Pauli?), 142, 203, 204; Rep. III 33, 36, 37, 40, 55, 60, 147, 148, 1687, 218, 221, 222, 416, 460; Rep. IV 5 (Strikingly two man, one bearded the other beardless, take the arms of the orans depicted in the centre of this fluted sarcophagus. The composition corresponds to the scene of Peter's arrest, but here the gesture indicates support and not arrest), 6, 54, 58, 57, 74, 19. In some cases the arrest and the water miracle are concentrated to one single scene: Rep. I 99; Rep. II 98; Rep. III 218, 511; Rep. IV 46, 55, 150.
78 Rep. II 151, 152, 225; Rep. III 304, 418.
79 Rep. I 433; Rep. III 158, for other fragments, see Dijkstra (2016) 320 n. 95.
80 Rep. III 68, 201? (lost fragment), 497 (left side), for other rare and uncertain examples, see Dijkstra (2016) 323 n. 107.
81 Rep. I 262, 943; Rep. III 515 in combination with his arrest: Rep. III 35, 38, 40, 51, 273, 359−557.
82 Rep. II 122.
Out of this variety of representations, especially the scene of Peter’s arrest can allude to his martyrdom.\textsuperscript{83} It is often depicted on frieze sarcophagi of the first half of the 4th century. As the arrest is commonly combined with the water miracle, it cannot refer to the first arrest of Peter together with John in Jerusalem (\textit{Acts} 4. 1–3), but the one in Rome.\textsuperscript{84} Thus, the apostle’s arrest depicted on the sarcophagi is the starting point of the story of his passion and should be understood as a reference to his death on the cross, since this last aspect of the narration was never explicitly depicted in early Christian art. On the great majority of sarcophagi, the soldiers in the scene of Peter’s arrest do not even carry a weapon: the aspect of violence is limited to the soldiers’ catching at Peter’s arms. It is the military costume, especially the \textit{pileus pannonicus} on the many early examples (310–360) and usually also the \textit{paludamentum} on the later passion sarcophagi, that makes the scene easily recognisable and provides its (limited) aggressive connotation.

We will focus on the rare cases in which one of the soldiers is armed (\textit{Rep.} I 6, 57?, 61, 215, 680, 771).\textsuperscript{85} On the sarcophagus of Iunius Bassus (\textit{Rep.} I 680), the arrest of Peter is paralleled both typologically and ideologically by that of Christ before Pilate. Both scenes flanking the central \textit{Dominus legem dat} can hint at the following suffering and death of their protagonists. The sarcophagus shows Christ’s arrest on the right of the central niche and Peter’s on the left. In both scenes, the soldier that rests his arm on his sword forces the protagonist to move on. The aspect of violence is reduced but perceivable.

According to Guntram Koch a fragmentary column sarcophagus (\textit{Rep.} I 57) is an example for a more violent solution to depicting Peter’s arrest (fig. 8.9). It shows in its central niche a \textit{Dominus legem dat} scene, on the right of which is depicted Christ before Pilate (in two niches) and, on the left, two soldiers discharging a short-bearded man in \textit{tunica} and \textit{pallium}, whose arms are bound behind his back. The soldier next to him raises a sword in his right hand. The weapon is nowadays almost entirely lost, but its pommel can still be recognized. I do not know of any other representation of Peter’s arrest in which the

\textsuperscript{83} Grabar (1946) 15; Dresken-Weiland (2010a) 140 f.; Dresken-Weiland (2011) 151.

\textsuperscript{84} Gerke and Koch speak of an arrest in Palestine or a first arrest, Koch (2000) 184 f. According to Gerke (1939) 210 the scene was connected to the water miracle, albeit this is located in the Roman \textit{career} at least in the late fourth century (?) version of the \textit{Acts of Peter} (attributed to Pseudo-Linus), see Zwierlein (2010) 431 and Dresken-Weiland (2011) 131 (with further reference).

\textsuperscript{85} I refrain from adding \textit{Rep.} II 120 to this small group. Given its fragmentary state of preservation, an interpretation as scene of Peter’s arrest is problematic for two reasons: 1. It shows two soldiers side a side whereas in all other certain scenes of Peter’s arrest, the soldiers are flanking the apostle. 2. The drawn sword in the hand of one soldier is a feature that is very uncommon for the arrest of Peter, while it is typical for the martyrdom of Paul.
The apostle’s arms are bound behind his back, whereas this is a common detail for the martyrdom of Paul, as stated by Koch. Both, the bound arms and the risen sword, seem to favour an interpretation as martyrdom of Paul as proposed by Umberto Utro. Still, considering the dating at the end of the fourth century, when the iconography of Peter and Paul had already been well established, an identification with Paul, seems problematic for two reasons: beard and hairstyle contradict this interpretation, as does the absence of the column with the rostra that regularly appears in the background of scenes with Paul. The authors of *Repertorium* I simply speak of a “bärtiger Apostel” not suggesting any identification either with Peter or Paul. Still, the unusual, explicit depiction of a violent gesture, namely the rising of the sword, needs to be explained. The scene is next to the central scene showing a youthful Christ on a hill from which flow the four rivers of paradise. On the left of the middle scene, that is, symmetrical to the scene depicting the arrest of the undefined apostle, Christ

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86 The martyrdom of Paul is depicted on some passion sarcophagi (*Rep.* I 61, 267, 184, 201, 212, 215, 667, 680; *Rep.* II 120 (?); *Rep.* III 211, 297 (in two scenes: 1. the martyrdom itself and 2. Paul with a rope around his neck showing his arrest by Tamiri), 416, 498, 569) see also Koch (2000) 188.

87 Utro (2009c) 189 No. 62. Utro assumed that on the missing parts of the sarcophagus front the martyrdom of Peter could have been depicted. For the iconography of Paul in early Christian art, see Bisconti (2001); Uggeri (2010) 228–237; Utro (2011); *RAC* 26 (2014) 1229–1250 s. v. Paulus IV. Ikonographie u. Kult (E. Dassmann).

88 In the first part of the fourth century the iconography of the apostles is not that strict on sarcophagi, but the narrative context helps identifying them, Kollwitz (1936) 54–55; Dinkler (1938/39) 37 fn. 5.

89 See for example *Rep.* I 212; *Rep.* III 297, 569.
is represented as being escorted by two soldiers to Pilate. One of the soldiers next to Christ carries a spear. The risen sword may have been added to repeat the composition of the scene showing Christ before Pilate.90

On “Lateran Sarcophagus 164” (Rep. I 61, fig. 8.10) and on Rep. I 215, the presence of the sword can be explained by the symmetrical representation of the martyrdom of Paul. Whereas in the case of Rep. I 6 (fig. 8.11) and 771, the sword cannot be explained by the composition, but maybe by the early date, as Gerke observed a more violent character in the earlier depictions. There are examples of frieze sarcophagi on which Peter’s face shows clear signs of anger against the soldiers (fig. 8.11), whereas on the passion sarcophagi he is ready to accept his fate like a philosopher (fig. 8.10).91 Still, there are other examples that help to underline the importance of a balanced composition underlining the typological correspondence between Peter and Christ:

On a sarcophagus from the late fourth century (Rep. I 58),92 we find again scenes related to the Christ’s passion combined with those of the passion of Peter (fig. 8.12). The passion of Christ is represented by the scenes showing Christ on his way to Pilate, who washes his hands. This scene is paralleled by the washing of Peter’s feet through the hands of Christ on the left side of the sarcophagus’ front. Peter’s arrest parallels that of Christ, who is flanked by two

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90 Scenes showing the rising of Lazarus and the water miracle are often also arranged at the corner of sarcophagi with one single frieze for compositional reasons, see Dinkler (1938/39) 24. In addition, iconographical details as the rotulus with an inscribed christogram in the hands of Christ and Peter connect both ideologically, cf. De Bruyne (1969) 60 fig. 9 and 10.

91 Gerke (1939) 210 f.

92 Dresken-Weiland (2010a) 140 f.; Dresken-Weiland (2011) 151.
Figure 8.11  Frieze sarcophagus (*Rep. I 6; “Lateran sarcophagus 161”), marble, 1st quarter of 4th c., Vatican, Museo Pio Cristiano

Figure 8.12  Sarcophagus with columns (*Rep. I 58), marble, late 4th c., Vatican, Museo Pio Cristiano
soldiers. One of them holds a spear in his hand. Correspondingly, the soldier preceding Peter carries a cross over his left shoulder. Here, the cross is not only the attribute of Christian victory but also the tool for the apostle’s future martyrdom;\(^93\) it makes this scene one of the rare narrative images from late antiquity that explicitly refer to the apostle’s death on the cross. There are only four other sarcophagi with similar iconography: two in Rome (Rep. I 189 and 667), one in Nîmes and another in St.-Maximin-la-Ste.-Baume (Rep. III 412 and 498).\(^94\) On Rep. I 667, spear and cross appear together in the scenes (Christ in front of Pilate / Peter on his way to crucifixion) flanking the central cross that ends in a Chi-Rho decorated with a corona by the princes of the Apostles. Here the assimilation of Peter and Christ was so suggestive that Orazio Marucchi who first published the piece mixed the protagonists in the scene left to the centre: instead of Peter and the soldier with the cross, he erroneously recognized Christ and Simon of Cyrene.\(^95\) On the examples from Gaul, instead of the spear we find a vitis in the hands of the soldier proceeding Christ on his way to Pilate. On Rep. III 498 (fig. 8.13) and on an unfinished sarcophagus with columns (Rep. I 189), the cross in the scene of Peter’s arrest – or better Peter on his way to crucifixion – can be explained by the scene to the left of it. It shows the martyrdom of Paul. The apostle is depicted with his head sunk and the soldier drawing his sword to decapitate Paul in the next moment. Paul’s decollation is never depicted but is hinted at by both the lowering of his head (although this might also be a sign of resignation or more probably of stoic endurance as proposed for Peter on the passion sarcophagi) and the drawn sword of the soldier.\(^96\) In analogy, the cross next to Peter marks his imminent death. Corresponding

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\(^{93}\) On the cross as attribute of martyrs in early Christian art, see Schäfer (1936). Schäfer did obviously know only scenes, in which Peter carries the cross by himself. In comparison with a sixth-century ivory plaque (USA, Bryn Athyn, Pitcairn collection) that shows the apostle holding the cross on the paradise hill he concludes that the cross in Peter’s hands on passion sarcophagi would never refer to his own but only to Christ’s passion, see Schäfer (1936) 80 f. and for the ivory plaque Volbach (1952) No. 134.

\(^{94}\) On some sarcophagi showing a Dominus legem dat Peter carries a cross over his left shoulder: Rep. II 149–150 (cross decorated with gems), 152, 383, 389, 390; Rep. III 25 (cross decorated with gems), 120, 428 (cross decorated with gems), 465, 499 (cross decorated with gems), 642. Rep. V 23. On a fragment showing Peter probably as a witness of a miracle by Christ he also carries a cross (Rep. V. 153), according to J. G. Deckers as a symbol of his passion already overcome. As it shows Peter in a narrative that took place before his death, the cross is also a symbol for his future martyrdom.

\(^{95}\) Saggiorato (1962) 49; Marucchi (1927) 266.

\(^{96}\) Rep. III 297 (scenes on the far left and right), 416 (? only known in a sketch), 498, 569 (fragment, combination with Peter uncertain). According to Saggiorato (1968) 98 Paul bows his head to receive the final strike.
to the combination with the passion of Christ (with or without spear), Peter's arrest still implies his future death on the cross.

The scene of arrest is frequently combined with the water miracle during Peter's imprisonment, a scene not known from the *Acts of the Apostles* but from the *Acts of Peter*. As Jutta Dresken-Weiland has argued, this combination underlined the moment of conversion of the guards and the focus of the scene lays on the conversation between Peter and the soldiers that led to their final conversion. She convincingly refuses the interpretation recently offered by Martine Dulaey, who put the scene “dans le cadre des images baptismales.”

In many examples of this representation, the mostly unarmed soldiers hold

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97 Bisconti (2001) 396 f. Scenes of arrest (especially of Jesus, Peter or Paul) were a suitable visual strategy to show Christian exclusivity by depicting the conflict with pagan authorities. Another good example is the iconography of the three Hebrews in front of Nebuchadnezzar. For a general discussion of this visual rhetoric of invective against paganism by Christian heroes as examples of the true faith, see Elsner (2014) esp. 342–347. See above n. 83.

98 Dresken-Weiland (2010a) 162. See also Dresken-Weiland's and Dijkstra's contribution to this volume.

99 Dulaey (2008) 344; Dresken-Weiland (2011) 135, 138.
Peter’s wrist. Dulaey calls this gesture ‘suppliant’ and refers to a sarcophagus with scenes showing the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. It must be noticed that here it is only children that are taken on their wrist. Therefore, the gesture cannot be compared with the arrest of Peter. In scenes showing Christ’s arrest or Christ before Pilate on passion sarcophagi or on the lower register of the lid of the fourth-century Brescia casket the same gesture is depicted. In this context a gesture of assistance does not make any sense. On the contrary, these comparisons underline the aggressive character of the scene of Peter’s arrest: it is by no means suppliant.

Dulaey is also puzzled by the direction the soldiers take: in 39 cases depicting the arrest of Peter, they are moving away from the scene with the water miracle, whereas in only four pieces they are moving towards the font in the carcer Tullianus. Dresken-Weiland explained this with the general direction of narration in late antique art moving from left to right. Another possible solution could be to understand the scene as representing not the moment before Peter’s imprisonment, but immediately before his crucifixion, when the soldiers are leading Peter out of prison (the place of the water miracle) towards the place of his execution. The rare scenes in which one of the soldiers carries a cross, both to be found on passion sarcophagi (Rep. I 189 and Rep. III 498, here fig. 8.13), favour this interpretation. Maybe the two fragments on which one soldier carries a sword in his hand hint towards the same interpretation and some scenes traditionally interpreted as the arrest before Peter’s imprisonment are showing him on his way to his crucifixion. A weapon implies always the possibility of using it, in this case to force the apostle to move to his place of martyrdom.

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100 Dulaey (2008) 314–8. Only in rare cases, the soldiers do not even touch Peter at all (Rep. I 14, Rep. II 100, 96 and Rep. III 297).
101 Dulaey (2008) 316. Rep. I 188 (Lot, too badly preserved to allow a comparison with the arrest of Peter); Rep. II 146, Rep. III 41 (Red Sea).
102 A definite gesture of assistance can be seen in Rep. III 41, showing again a representation of the flight of the Israelites. Among his fellows, an old Israelite clearly holds on to the two younger men. He accepts their helping hand, which is not the case in the scene of Peter’s arrest. Peter does not lay his hand in that of the soldiers. On the contrary, the soldiers take him at his upper arm or at his wrist.
103 Dulaey (2008) 313.
104 Dresken-Weiland (2011) 135 n. 44.
105 Stuhlfauth (1925) 101–4 called this scene Peter on the way to his ‘Richtstätte’ (place of execution). A concise classification of even four different scenes (I a ‘Verhaftung’, I b ‘Gefangenführung’, II a ‘zur Richtstätte’, II b ‘auf der Richtstätte’) as proposed by Stuhlfauth (1925) 72–125 seems not justified regarding the only minor differences between them, see Dijkstra (2016) 351–52.
106 Rep. I 287 und Rep. I 6.
For all that, Peter is never harmed by his guards and shows no signs of bodily pain. Arrest and water miracle, both part of Peter’s passion, are reflecting the Christological scenes on the passion sarcophagi. Here and there the protagonists do not suffer, their violent death is not depicted. This ideological connection between Christ and his first apostle is mirrored in the symmetrical composition of many sarcophagi. The scenes of the apostle’s passion without suffering emphasize other qualities than the scenes of martyrdom do.

3 Concluding Remarks or: Neither Victim nor Victor

Regarding the martyrdom of Peter the question “victim or victor?” remains open or rather, it is not addressed at all, as the focus on the sarcophagi lies elsewhere. The figure of the apostle had ideologically, and thus also iconographically, more to offer than the martyrs in the cases discussed above. It was the martyrs’ merit to endure their suffering and to die for their Christian faith. In the case of Achilleus and Nereus basically nothing is known about their lives. It is their death that matters and that was depicted, albeit only rarely, for the reasons explained above. In contrast, Peter was a more colourful figure who is paralleled with Christ: he is depicted as a wonder worker, as in the scene showing the raising Tabitha or the water miracles. As the death of Christ, the apostle’s death is only hinted at. Even in the Acts of Peter, that tell us about the apostle’s crucifixion, his suffering on the cross is neglected. Bodily pain and its endurance, a crucial aspect in the lives of the martyrs, is of no importance in Peter’s life. Consequently images of him focused on other aspects, such as his miracles, the concordia apostolorum, or the Dominus legem dat. When at the end of the fourth century these sarcophagi got out of use, an iconography of Christ’s crucifixion and of martyrdom stood at its beginning, and developed only slowly in the following centuries. From the sixth century onwards, images of Christ’s crucifixion became more common under the influence of souvenirs from the Holy Land, but depictions of martyrdom remained rare. In Rome a dead saint, still without signs of his torture or violent death, was depicted for the first time in the second quarter of the eighth century in the frescoes in the Catacomb of Calepodius showing the burial of pope Callixtus. It took almost another hundred years to come up with a representation of decapitated

107 Acts of Peter 9.1 tells us that he started preaching right after being put upon the cross, the painful procedures has no effect on Peter.
108 Jensen (2017) 62–64.
109 Minasi (2009) 83.
martyrs in the cycle of frescoes in the transept of S. Prassede dating to the pontificate of Paschalis I. (817–824).

Acknowledgement

I want to thank Dorine van Espelo and Roald Dijkstra for their hospitality and enthusiasm in organizing the congress on Peter in Amsterdam and especially Roald for his excellent comments on my article and his great effort in publishing this proceedings. I am also very grateful to Kristine Iara (Rome), who helped to clarify my argument on some points; this also applies to the anonymous reviewer. Additionally, I am indebted to Gregory Tucker (Regensburg) for improving the English of the text. All remaining mistakes are my own.

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